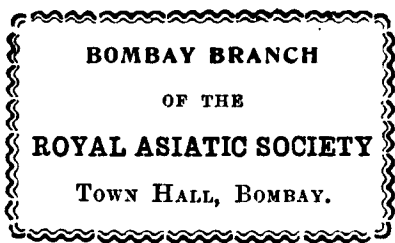




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Vincent Brooks, lith. London.

A BRITISH CAPTIVE AT MAGDALA.

THE
BRITISH CAPTIVES

IN

ABYSSINIA.

1957

BY

CHARLES T. BEKE, PH.D., F.S.A.

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AUTHOR OF

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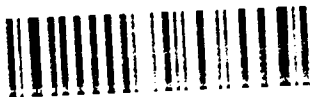
SECOND EDITION.

RR 133A

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, AND DYER.

1867.

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PREFACE.

WHEN I sat down to prepare for the press a second edition of the pamphlet which I published nearly two years ago, I contemplated a tract of perhaps twice or thrice the size of the former edition. As the work grew under my hand, I soon perceived that it would make a fair-sized volume: by and by I found that it might be enough for two volumes.

Under this change of circumstances, it became necessary to decide whether I should delay the publication of any portion of the work until I had completed the whole, or whether I ought not rather at once to issue the first part of it, which is really an enlargement of the former edition, and leave the remainder, which relates more especially to myself and the journey that my wife and I have just undertaken, to form not merely a second volume but a separate work.

Feeling that the public must be far more interested in the fate of the hapless British Captives in Abyssinia than in our personal adventures, I have deemed the former course to be the preferable one. A further inducement for bringing this portion of my labours before the public without delay, is the consideration that the subject of the captivity of our countrymen, which has already attracted the atten-

tion of the Legislature during the last three sessions of Parliament, is sure to be again brought forward as soon as Parliament assembles, when it will likewise be necessary to discuss the Abyssinian Question with reference to all the circumstances which have led to a state of things so discreditable to the British name.

But, though coming to the conclusion that it was better to defer my personal narrative for a separate work, I have found it necessary, in order to render the present volume complete in itself, to refer to several matters connected with myself and my late journey, which would have appeared more suitably in connexion with that narrative, had it formed a portion of the single work originally contemplated.

I had also prepared some remarks on another subject, which, being of a purely personal character, were in like manner intended to accompany that personal narrative; but, for reasons which will be apparent, I have decided on publishing them here.

My recent journey has in fact not merely been displeasing to friends connected with the late Administration, but it has also given dissatisfaction to others more closely associated with myself personally. I am blamed for taking up a cause in which I am alleged to have no concern, for acting as a political partisan, and for being a dreamer,—and, what in a worldly sense is worse than all, an unprofitable dreamer. To the last of these charges alone do I plead guilty. In anything connected with Abyssinia, let it be what it may, I cannot be said to have no concern. Further, that I have not been actuated by any party spirit is established by the fact that

ever since I returned from Abyssinia in 1843 till the publication of my pamphlet, 'The French and English in the Red Sea,' in 1862—during the far greater portion of which long interval the party now in opposition was in power—I proffered advice and assistance in the most friendly spirit, both to the Foreign Office and to the Board of Trade, though (as I have regretted to see) without any good effect. It was not till matters had gone so far that I felt I ought no longer to allow what I had said to remain hidden in the archives of public offices, that I published that pamphlet; and even then what I made known was quite as much for the information of Her Majesty's Government as for that of the public. I may say the same as regards the first edition of the present work.

As to my being a dreamer, whilst not denying the charge, I must say in extenuation that I have likewise been a worker, and a hard worker; and I question whether it has fallen to the lot of many persons who have dreamed so widely and apparently so wildly, to have seen, to such an extent as I have, their dreams "come true."

Having said thus much, I am bound to say more, and I trust I shall be excused for availing myself of this opportunity to show the truth of what I have just asserted.

My first dream, then, was one of my childhood. It was that I should some day live at the place to which my forefathers gave their name seven centuries ago. Three-and-thirty years have elapsed (a whole generation of man) since the time when, in anticipation of my coming to live at Bekesbourne, I changed

the spelling of my family name from Beek to Beke*. But before this my early dream was realized, I had

* The name is Flemish—Van der Beke; and its original form, or rather forms in England were De Beke, Del Beke, and De la Beke, or, written as pronounced in Latin, De Beche, Del Beche, and De la Beche. In the course of time it came to be spelled Beake and Beak in East Kent, and Beeke and Beek in West Kent.

The Rev. Christopher Beeke, father of Dr. Henry Beeke, Dean of Bristol, and my grandfather Charles Beek, were distant cousins, and both left the county, the former in 1736 for Devonshire, the latter in 1760 for London. They are thus mentioned for the purpose of placing on record two parallel anecdotes respecting my grandfather and Dean Beeke, which are too good to be lost.

Charles Beek lived in Mile-end New-town, Stepney, and was a Justice of the Peace, a colleague and neighbour of his being Justice Wilmot of Bethnal Green. At that time, as there were no stipendiary Magistrates, the resident Justices of the Peace in and about London acted as those in the country do now; and my grandfather being an active and leading person within the Tower Hamlets, obtained in consequence the name of "King Beek."

In the Gordon riots of 1780, when, as is known, the mob destroyed the houses of many of the nobility, magistrates, and other notables, a section of the rioters at the east end of the town were on their way to my grandfather's house, when a tenant of his, who had mixed in the crowd as a looker-on rather than as an actor, called out—"Don't let's go to King Beek's. He's a jolly good fellow. Let's go to Justice Wilmot's"—joining to his name a few choice but not very complimentary epithets. As in the case of another section of the same rioters at the Inner Temple gate, a chance word sufficed to turn the mob. To Justice Wilmot's they went, sure enough, and burned his house down! Before they had time to think again of my grandfather, a party of horseguards arrived to protect him.

The other anecdote respecting Dean Beeke is almost identical. In the Bristol riots of 1831, the mob were about to destroy the Deanery, when some one suggested that they should not injure or molest the good old Dean, on which they went and destroyed the Bishop's palace instead!

to wait seven-and-twenty years longer; for it was only in 1860 that I succeeded in coming to reside in the home of my ancestors. Whether I shall lay my bones where theirs were laid, is in the hands of the Disposer of all events, who has so graciously permitted me to worship Him where once they worshiped.

That I should have changed the spelling of my name so long ago as 1833, was because I was at that time engaged in preparing for the press my work 'Origines Biblicæ; or Researches in Primeval History' (a Book of Dreams—or "crotchets," as they have been styled by a high authority, who in so doing forgot himself); and I felt that when I came to occupy a niche in the Temple of Fame, as I "dreamed" I should, I must not do so under an *alias*.

Without desiring to enter upon any general consideration of that work, its scope, or its contents, I must still be permitted to allude to a few of the "dreams" contained in it.

The first was that the land at the head of the Persian Gulf has advanced at so rapid a rate, as materially to affect the comparative geography of Babylonia and the neighbouring regions. Of course this was pooh-poohed at the time: for had not scholars written erudite volumes on the assumption of there having been no change? and had not the learned Heeren even expressed the opinion that in the time of Nearchus the northern coast of the gulf extended further south than it does at the present day? Nevertheless, seventeen years afterwards, the Presi-

dent of the Royal Geographical Society, (the late Admiral Smyth,) when adverting in his anniversary address to a dissertation of Sir Henry Rawlinson on the Biblical Cities of Assyria and on the geography of the Lower Tigris, in which it is stated that the Delta of the Tigris and the Euphrates "is found to have advanced since the commencement of the Christian era, at the extraordinary degree of a mile in thirty years—a rate of increase probably about twice that of the growth of the Sunderbunds or any other known delta"—added "This agrees, in fact, with the statements which Dr. Beke, one of your Fellows, published in the 'Philosophical Magazine' as far back as February 1834; and in his 'Origines Biblicæ' in the same year"*.

The next dream of 'Origines Biblicæ' which has been realized is as to the site of the patriarchal Harran. This town is described in the Scriptures as being situate in *Aram Naharaim*—"Syria of the Two Rivers;" which country has been placed by commentators between Euphrates and Tigris, the two rivers of Asshur or Assyria; whereas it appeared to me to be between the two rivers of *Aram* or Syria, Abana and Pharpar. As there were no signs of a place with such a name in the locality indicated, my dream or "crotchet" was ridiculed or passed over without notice. But, after many years, a place of the name was found to exist precisely where in 1834 I said it must

* 'Journ. Roy. Geogr. Soc.' vol. xxi. p. lxxx. I should explain that the article in the 'Philosophical Magazine' was the second chapter of 'Origines Biblicæ,' published in advance, as was known at the time to Sir Charles Lyell.

exist; and towards the end of 1861, more than twenty-seven years afterwards, I performed a pilgrimage to Harran, accompanied by my wife, who has written an account of our journey.

Next is the position of Mount Sinai, my dream with respect to which is not yet realized, and hardly will be by myself, though the traditional mountain is already rent and shaken to its base, and cannot stand much longer. The true Mountain of the Law has to be sought for in the Desert of Arabia, east of the Ghor or Valley of the Jordan; and the indications in Scripture of its general locality are definite and absolute. In that desert "Moses kept the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of *Midian*;" and when "he led the flock to the *west* side of the desert," he "came to the Mountain of God, to Horeb"*. And at a later period of the Scripture History, the prophet Elijah, after eating and drinking in the desert of Beersheba, "went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the Mount of God," and thence, at the command of the still small voice, he "returned on his way to the desert of Damascus"†. Some traveller, younger, richer, more enterprising, and more favoured than myself, will, I feel persuaded, come forward ere long to search for this sacred spot, in the region thus indicated, taking, as I have done, the Bible as his sole guide, and carefully eschewing all traditional and (so called) authoritative identifications.

The non-identity of Egypt with the Mitzraim of

* Exod. iii. 1. The Authorized Version has "the *back* side of the desert."

† 1 Kings, xix. 8, 15.

the Exodus—another of my dreams—is the most paradoxical of all my “crotchets.” But the results of modern discoveries and investigations are all tending in that direction. And when we see such changes as in this present year, 1866, when Prussia and Italy are anything but the same countries they were only a few years back, it will no longer be astonishing that Misr, under the rule of the Turkish Viceroys of Egypt, should not correspond with the Land of Mizraim, of which the Hebrew Joseph was made governor by Pharaoh.

Another of my dreams is faintly indicated in ‘*Origines Biblicæ*.’ Not very long ago, when I heard as it were the voice of a trumpet talking with me, I tried to rouse myself to work it out; but I am not at present fit for the task, and it must still remain as a vision of the night.

The “dream” which has had the greatest influence on my actions—it having led to my travels in Abyssinia, with all their results direct and collateral, and in the end to the production of the present volume—is that contained in pages 158 and 159 of ‘*Origines Biblicæ*,’ where, when explaining the Dispersion of Mankind in accordance with the principles enunciated in that work, and speaking in particular of the descendants of Ham, I say:—“The other sons of Cush, in their progress southward, appropriated to themselves the eastern side, and in the course of time the whole, of the southern part of the peninsula of Arabia. From hence, as population increased, colonies of those Cushites, whose settlements lay towards the western side of the peninsula,

crossed over into Ethiopia, and settled there, becoming the aboriginal inhabitants of that country, and being in fact the stock from which, in the progress of time, has sprung the greater portion of the negro nations by whom the vast continent of Africa is peopled."

Abyssinia being thus indicated as the natural road of the human race into the interior of Africa, it naturally followed, as indeed history teaches, that this road should be that by which were introduced into that continent its three predominant religions, the Mosaic, the Christian, and the Mohammedan; and hence I was led to the inference—it is, I trust, something more than a dream—that by the same road Africa will be regenerated by means of European commerce as the precursor of Christian civilization.

It further became manifest to me why during so many ages the vast continent of Africa has remained as it were a sealed book, and why the efforts of civilized nations to establish relations with the interior of that continent have had so little success.

The arid and inhospitable character of the continent of Africa, its want of navigable rivers, and the barbarism of its inhabitants have been alleged as causes for this strange anomaly. But, active as all those causes may have been and still continue to be, recent discoveries have shown that they are far from being true to the extent generally attributed to them; for it is now demonstrated that Africa possesses fertile and genial regions, large rivers and lakes, and an immense population, which, if not civilized, is yet to a

considerable extent endowed with kindly manners, humane dispositions, and industrious habits.

The fundamental cause of the erroneous notions prevalent respecting Africa is, that Europeans have always approached that continent in a wrong direction. Towards the north, the districts skirting the Mediterranean Sea are cut off from the other portions of the continent by the rainless sands of the great Desert; towards the west, the climate truly exercises those baneful influences on European constitutions which have stamped their mark on the rest of the continent; towards the south, the form of the peninsula, which there runs almost to a point, prevents ready access to the vast internal regions further to the north. On all these sides, however, have we during centuries persisted in our endeavours to penetrate inwards, while the east coast has been unattempted and remained almost totally unknown. And yet it is in this direction that the interior of intertropical Africa is approachable with the greatest facility.

It was under the influence of the opinions thus expressed, and with a view to their realization, in part at least, through my own exertions, that I undertook, in the year 1840, a journey to the kingdom of Shoa; whence, in the following year, I proceeded across the river Abai into Godjam, Damot, and Agaumider, penetrating westward over seven degrees of longitude and one-fifth of the way across the continent of Africa in the direction of the Gulf of Benin—an achievement which might have been thought more of, had it been performed at the present day instead of a quarter of a century ago; and I returned home by a new road di-

rectly across Abyssinia, from the extreme south-west to its furthest limit in the north-east.

“Nor could his eye not ken
The empire of Negus to his utmost port,
Ercoco”*.

But the exploration and mapping of countries for the use of subsequent travellers formed the least important result of my geographical labours in Abyssinia. My observations enabled me to form a theory of the true physical structure of that country, and of Eastern Africa generally, which is becoming accepted as the true theory. It is, that the principal mountain-system of Africa extends from north to south, along the eastern side of the continent, adjacent to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, resembling, in its direction and rough parallelism to the coast, the Andes of South America and the Western Ghauts of India.

A corollary from this theory was the determination of the position and direction of the snowy “Mountains of the Moon,” in which the geographer Claudius Ptolemy placed the sources of the Nile. These mountains were universally supposed to traverse Africa parallel to the equator, being so represented in all the maps; whereas they are in reality merely a portion of the meridional range, of which the Abyssinian tableland forms the northern extremity.

* As regards the much-vexed subject of the Discovery of the Sources of the Nile, I have the satisfaction of knowing that whatever credit is due to me in this respect is now freely accorded to me by all whose

* Arkiko, opposite Massowah.

opinions are deserving of consideration as competent and impartial judges.

I might allude to many other results of my journey to Abyssinia, but will confine myself to placing here on record the following remarks, extracted from a paper on "The Nile and its Tributaries," which was communicated by me to the Royal Geographical Society in 1846, and published in the seventeenth volume of the Society's 'Journal' (pp. 82, 83):—
"This survey of the physical character of the plateau of Eastern Africa cannot be concluded without special attention being directed to a most important practical result which it affords. It is, that the eastern coast of that continent presents facilities for the exploration of the interior very superior to those possessed by the western coast. For, when the narrow belt of low land along the shores of the Indian Ocean—which, from its general dryness, arising from the absence of large rivers, is far from unhealthy at most seasons of the year—is once passed, and *the eastern edge of the elevated tableland is attained, a climate is met with, which is not merely congenial to European constitutions, but is absolutely more healthy than that of most countries. I speak from the experience of upwards of two years passed on the high land under circumstances anything but favourable.* Here—that is to say, on the edge of the elevated plateau, and not in the low desert country along the sea-coast—settlers might take up their permanent residence, without apprehensions as to the effects of the climate at any period of the year; while travellers might wait in safety, and even with advantage to their health, till

suitable opportunities should present themselves for penetrating westwards into the interior ; and, in the event of their having to retrace their steps, they would only return upon a healthy and delightful country, where they might remain till the proper season should arrive for their journey down to the coast. On the other hand, the climate of the western coast, even far inland, is notoriously such, that few can long withstand its baneful influences ; while a traveller is necessitated to press forwards, whatever may be the time of the year, whatever the condition of the country, whatever even his state of health. And should he, from sickness or any other unforeseen circumstance, be compelled to abandon his journey, he must do so with the painful knowledge that the further he retrogrades the more unhealthy are the districts which he has to traverse, and the less likelihood there is of his ever reaching the coast, more fatal than all the rest.”

It will be observed that my assertion that the climate of Abyssinia is absolutely more healthy than that of most countries, was based on my own experience of upwards of two years passed there under circumstances anything but favourable. But what are these circumstances compared with those under which the Captives have passed three miserable years of their lives, and yet apparently with so little injury to their bodily health ? In any other country in the world, not blessed with such a climate, they must long ago have succumbed to the privations and hardships to which they have been subjected.

It is requisite that I should dwell upon this point,

because of the mistaken notions entertained by the British Government, not less than by the public, respecting the climate and physical character of Abyssinia, which is in fact a temperate, well-watered, and most fertile country, inhabited by an agricultural and at the same time warlike people, and possessing capabilities not surpassed by those of any region on the face of the earth.

The notions entertained by our Government respecting the approaches to Abyssinia in the event of a war are, if possible, even more erroneous than those concerning the climate and physical character of that country.

In page 206 of the present Work I have quoted the assertion of the late Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, deliberately made in the House of Lords less than a twelvemonth ago, that "to attempt to send an army across that deadly plain which separates Abyssinia from the sea, and to penetrate into the interior of the country through mountain-passes and difficulties unknown, without any basis of operations or means of obtaining supplies, would have been a vain and idle endeavour." In page 178 I have shown what that "deadly plain" is "which separates Abyssinia from the sea;" and I will now add that, when on the 29th of last April my wife and I stood on the brink of the valley of the Hadás, within a mile of Halai, at an elevation of 8500 feet above the ocean—the tableland of Abyssinia there beginning and extending for hundreds of miles to the south and south-west—we could perceive the sea at Arkiko, opposite to Massowah, and that island itself

beyond, and we heard the report of the guns of the Egyptian frigate 'Ismailiáh,' sounding (it is to be feared) the death-knell of Christian Abyssinia*; whilst as regards a basis of operations, it exists in the sea off Adulis, whence the Sovereign of Ethiopia, the ally of the Emperor Justinian, transported 70,000 men into Arabia for the conquest of Yemen†; whither Captain Robert A. Parr, of H.M.S. 'Lyra,' was so good as to convey my wife and myself; and where, as that efficient officer would be able to report, a fleet of line-of-battle ships might lie in safety, at more than half the distance nearer to Halai than Arkiko.

As to the alleged "mountain-passes and difficulties unknown," it might really be imagined that no Europeans had been in Abyssinia since the time of Bruce and Salt. And yet, within the last quarter of a century, there are few "unknown" countries that have been visited and traversed in all directions by so large a number of educated Europeans, many of whom have published their journals or digested narratives of their travels.

That an army would be "without any means of obtaining supplies" in Abyssinia comes strangely from the Foreign Secretary, seeing that on March 28th, 1848, I addressed to his Lordship's predecessor in office, Viscount Palmerston, a letter, in which I suggested the practicability of victualling a British army in the Red Sea by means of supplies drawn from Abyssinia. It has been said that the best way to publish a matter and yet keep it secret, is to get it printed in a Blue-Book. It would really seem that

* See page 241.

† See page 177.

the way to keep information from the knowledge of the Head of a Government Department is to communicate it to himself officially.

Yet, after all, our Government and our Government Offices are not entirely to blame. It is the British public, who, not understanding the subject and being too much occupied with matters nearer home to study it, do not interest themselves in it as they ought; and our officials, perceiving that the public are not alive to the importance of the subject, are not sorry for any excuse for not troubling themselves with what does not concern those in whose service they are.

Still this is no justification for the conduct of the Foreign Office and the India Office (for this latter Department likewise must come in for its share of blame) as regards the way in which this unhappy Abyssinian Question appears to have been dealt with from beginning to end. †

My duty however is, not to blame, but to enlighten the British nation on this dark and difficult subject. When once the public, and especially the public press, is brought to understand it as it is requisite it should be understood, there can be no fear of its not being sifted to the bottom, and of justice being meted out to all with an equal and at the same time an unflinching hand.

Bekesbourne,
December 4th, 1866.

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THE
BRITISH CAPTIVES
IN
ABYSSINIA.

CHAPTER I.

BRITISH CAPTIVES—FACTS MISREPRESENTED AND CONCEALED—
ABYSSINIA—ITS SOVEREIGNS—GEOGRAPHICAL AND POLITICAL
DIVISIONS — TURKISH POSSESSIONS — MR. SALT'S MISSION —
SABAGADIS — UBYE — PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES IN TIGRE —
THEIR EXPULSION—ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSION—ENGLISH RE-
LIGIOUS AND POLITICAL MISSIONS TO SHOA—THEIR FAILURE.

NEARLY three years have elapsed since the sad and truly
astonishing intelligence was received, that the Christian
Sovereign of a Christian African people, who, though re-
mote from the civilized world, have during centuries pos-
sessed the sympathies of their co-religionists in Europe,
had perpetrated acts of the grossest cruelty towards several
Europeans resident within his dominions, who had long en-
joyed his favour and protection : acts more in accordance
with the customs of the brutish pagan nations of Western
and Central Africa, than suited to a people on whom the
light of the Gospel shone in an age when the greater

portion of the now civilized nations of Europe were still in utter darkness.

Captain Cameron, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul in Abyssinia, two missionaries of the London Society for promoting Christianity amongst the Jews, and several other British subjects and persons connected with British missionary societies,—men, women, and children,—have been for three years the captives of Theodore, Emperor of Abyssinia, an African potentate, whose name was previously unknown to a large majority of the British nation. Her Majesty's Representative and several of these captives have further been subjected to the greatest indignities and even to cruel torture, and they have long remained in prison, chained hand and foot, herded together with the lowest criminals; whilst to add to the difficulties and disgrace of all parties concerned, Mr. Rassam, the Envoy sent by the Government of this country with a letter signed by Her Majesty's own hand, with a view to effect the liberation of the unfortunate persons who have so long lingered in captivity, has himself been thrown into prison, together with the members of his suite.

What the cause is of all this ill-usage of Her Majesty's subjects and others and of this great indignity to the British nation, remains still almost as little truly known to the public, as it was on the day (March 12th, 1864) when the news first arrived in England of the imprisonment and illtreatment of these unfortunate Europeans*.

The subject has been mooted during the last three

* The previous detention of Consul Cameron was known in Europe as early as December 15th, 1863, but was heeded by no one.

sessions of Parliament; and, though at first treated as insignificant, it has day by day gone on increasing in importance, till at length it has come to be regarded as a national question of the greatest magnitude, involving not only the character of the late Administration, but that also of the British nation. It is fervently hoped—though almost against hope—that nothing will intervene to prevent the eventual liberation of the unfortunate captives. But under any circumstances it behoves the public to know the real facts of the case, which have hitherto been most grievously misrepresented and by every possible means attempted to be concealed. As far therefore as those facts have come to my knowledge, I have put them together and arranged them in a connected form; so as to give a narrative of the events that have led to the present deplorable state of affairs, the treatment to which our unfortunate countrymen have been subjected, and what has been done to procure their liberation,—a task which my long residence in Abyssinia, the relations I have continued to keep up with that country, and especially the journey from which I have recently returned, have furnished me with peculiar means of performing.

Before commencing this narrative, it is advisable that I should give a brief summary of the geographical and political condition of the country which is the scene of these lamentable occurrences, in order that the subject may be rendered intelligible to the general reader.

The once rich and powerful Christian empire of Ethiopia, commonly known as Abyssinia or Habesh, has, during the last three centuries, been in a progressive state of decay. Its fertile provinces have been overrun and devas-

tated by numerous tribes of pagan Gallas from the south, whilst the occupation of its entire seaboard by the Turks has annihilated its commerce and shut it out from communication with the civilized world. The empire itself, thus weakened and debased, has become the prey of intestine wars and anarchy, till at last it has almost lost its place in the list of nations.

Until the accession of the reigning sovereign, Theodore, whose singular history will be related in the sequel, Abyssinia was an hereditary monarchy, under the sway of an Emperor claiming descent from Solomon, king of Israel, and the Queen of Sheba. Though this parentage is of a character similar to that of the ancient kings of Britain and Scotland, there are few Christian sovereigns who can boast of a more illustrious lineage than the Emperors of Ethiopia, whose progenitors received the Christian faith and possessed a native version of the Holy Scriptures as early as the fourth century.

The occupiers of the throne of their once absolute and mighty ancestors had, for a considerable time past, been mere puppets in the hands of the one or the other of their powerful vassals; the form having been kept up of nominating a sovereign of the line of Solomon, who, however, remained a prisoner in his palace at Gondar, his sole revenue consisting of a small stipend and the tolls of the weekly market of that city*.

From about the commencement of the present century until the year 1853, the seat of government and the per-

* It is said that the present intrusive Emperor Theodore still continues to treat Hatsye Yohannes, the puppet Emperor, as his suzerain, standing in his presence with his body uncovered down to the waist, as Abyssinian servants are used to do when waiting on their masters.

son of the sovereign remained, though with occasional interruptions, in the hands of the chiefs of a powerful tribe of Yedju (Edjow) Gallas, who for three generations had been able to secure to themselves the dignity of *Ras* or Vizier of the empire—that is to say, to become its sovereigns in everything but in name. This sovereignty within the central portion of the empire, however, was far from giving them the command over the outlying provinces. On the contrary, each ruler of a province mostly acted as an independent sovereign; and if at any time he found himself strong enough to march upon the capital, he did so, placed upon the throne another puppet sovereign, and was by him appointed *Ras* or Vizier, which dignity he retained till a rival stronger than himself could turn him out and take his place. Under such circumstances, it is no wonder that there should have been at one time half-a-dozen titular Emperors, and that the Governor of each of the principal provinces should have assumed the title of *Ras*, and continued to bear it even when no longer in power.

It would be no easy task to enumerate all the sections into which, through wars and their consequences, this unhappy country has become divided. For all practical purposes it will be sufficient to particularize Amhara, as the central portion of Abyssinia, containing the capital, is generally though incorrectly called—"Amhara" being properly a province of Central Abyssinia, now principally in the possession of Mohammedan Gallas of the Wollo and Yedju tribes, and the stronghold of the family and partisans of Ras Ali;—Tigre in the north-east, and Shoa in the south-east of Amhara, which two provinces have spe-

cially become known to European nations through the alliances and diplomatic relations into which, separately and as independent States, they have entered either with England or with France;—to which have to be added Godjam, in the extreme south-west, Kwara, in the extreme north-west, and Lasta, a portion of Central Abyssinia, situate to the south of Tigre.

Tigre is the representative of the kingdom of the Axumites of ancient history. It adjoins the Turkish island and port of Massowah in the Red Sea, round which it extends full one hundred and sixty miles to the west and south; so that, without passing through it, no communication can be held with Amhara or any other portion of the interior. It is almost entirely surrounded by the river Tákkazye, which separates it from the rest of Abyssinia, from which it is further distinguished by its language, the representative of the ancient Ethiopic or Geez, in which is the early version of the Bible.

The physical conformation of Shoa enabled it to preserve its independence when the rest of Abyssinia, except Tigre, was overrun by the Gallas; and it has long been governed by a native race of princes, who, without taking part in the disturbances of the rest of the empire, have transmitted the crown from father to son during eight generations.

Godjam, from its lying within the curve of the river Abai (the “Nile” of the Portuguese and of Bruce), has always maintained a quasi-independence; and its rulers, like those of Tigre, have at times gained possession of the capital and the person of the nominal sovereign, and been by him appointed Ras or Vizier, with the real power.

Kwara, though usually recognizing the sovereignty of the nominal Emperor or his representative, has long been noted for the successful stand its chiefs have made against the inroads of the Turco-Egyptians; and it has recently become yet more distinguished from its having given to the empire its actual ruler.

Lasta is the least known though most remarkable portion of Abyssinia, its inhabitants speaking a language radically different from those of Tigre and Amhara, and being apparently the descendants of the primitive occupants of the whole country. Their hereditary princes possess extensive and peculiar privileges, but disclaim all honorary titles at the hand of the Sovereign, by whom they are, however, treated as equals; contenting themselves with the simple designation of *Shum* or governor, a title which is borne by the head man of a village, and even the steward of a gentleman's household. The prince of Lasta, who is styled Waag-shum, or Governor of Waag, has always been a faithful vassal of his suzerain; till in the person of Góbazye, the present holder of that rank and title, a pretender to the imperial throne has arisen, who bids fair to play a prominent part in the history of the empire.

Before concluding these geographical and political definitions, essential to the proper understanding of the subject, it has to be remarked that Abyssinia, the country comprising the several States just named, is a high tableland separated from the sea by a belt of low and almost waterless desert, very narrow at the north in the neighbourhood of Massowah, and widening towards the south, till, in the latitude of Zeila, which is nearly that of Shoa,

the edge of the tableland recedes almost 200 miles from the coast. These lowlands, formerly more or less under the sway of the Emperors of Ethiopia, are now occupied by various independent Dankali tribes, who, with their neighbours the Somaulis and other nomadic people yet further south, are commonly, but erroneously, called Hubshees (*Habshis*) or Abyssinians, which frequently causes no little confusion. The *Abyssinia* of history is properly limited to the high tableland, and so the term is employed here.

Since the middle of the sixteenth century, when the Turks with the aid of the Venetians drove the Portuguese out of the Red Sea, the Ottoman Porte has claimed the entire sea-board along the territory of these Dankali tribes; a claim which the natives have not had the power nor the inclination to resist. Until quite recently the Turks actually occupied only the ports of Sawakin and Massowah, though they have occasionally made demonstrations along the coast for the purpose of asserting their sovereignty. The transfer to the Pasha of Egypt of the entire possessions of the Ottoman Porte on the western shores of the Red Sea, which has been made only during the present year, may, however, give to Mohammedanism in North-eastern Africa a vitality which it has not hitherto possessed; and it may even cause the pretensions of Turkey to the sovereignty of the whole of Christian Abyssinia, to become something more than merely nominal, as they have been until now.

The foregoing remarks will, it is hoped, enable the reader to follow the course of events about to be narrated. ●

The attempt of the French to acquire possession of

Egypt, towards the close of the last century, naturally led the English to direct their attention to the Red Sea and Eastern Africa; and in the year following that of the defeat and expulsion from Egypt of the invaders, Lord Valentia, the nephew of Marquess Wellesley, Governor-General of India, undertook a voyage into the Indian seas, on which occasion he dispatched his Secretary, Mr. Salt, afterwards Consul-General in Egypt, into Abyssinia.

Mr. Salt was unable to penetrate beyond Tigre, where he was well received by the ruler of that province, Ras Walda Selásye, with whom, as the representative of the then reigning sovereign, he entered into friendly relations. In the year 1810, Mr. Salt returned to Abyssinia, bearing a letter and presents from King George III. to the Emperor; which he however delivered to Ras Walda Selásye, owing to the hostilities between that prince and Ras Guksa, chief of the Yedju Gallas, who had then acquired the supremacy in Amhara.

Mr. Salt having been accredited to the Emperor of Abyssinia, and Guksa being at that time the actual Ras or Vizier, the latter, and not Walda Selásye of Tigre, was the legal representative of the reigning sovereign, and to him the King of England's letter and presents ought to have been delivered. But, as the object of the mission was to establish friendly relations with Abyssinia, and as for that purpose it was essential to cultivate the friendship of the prince whose dominions surrounded Massowah, the only port by which the country could well be approached; Mr. Salt very sensibly addressed himself to Ras Walda Selásye, to whom, as the independent ruler *de facto* of the province and ancient kingdom of Tigre, he delivered

the presents destined for the titular Emperor of the whole country.

Almost simultaneously with Mr. Salt's second visit to Abyssinia, the power of the French in the Indian seas was annihilated, by the capture of the Islands of Bourbon and Mauritius and the destruction of their settlements on the coast of Madagascar; and a few years later the fall of Napoleon led England to imagine there was no longer any cause to fear the aggressions of France in the East. As our statesmen, unlike those of France, do not possess any "ideas" on the subject, Abyssinia ceased therefore to be an object of solicitude.

But, though all diplomatic relations between England and Tigre were at an end, a certain connexion was still kept up by means of two Englishmen, named Pearce and Coffin, who had accompanied Mr. Salt to Abyssinia, and who remained behind when he left. In 1819, Pearce quitted Abyssinia for Egypt, where Mr. Salt was Consul General; but Coffin took up his permanent residence in Tigre, where he enjoyed the confidence of Dedjatj Sabagádis, who, shortly after Ras Walda Selásye's death in 1816, acquired the government of that province.

Mr. Salt had, on his second visit to Tigre, become acquainted with Sabagádis, then a young man, of whose disposition and talents he was led to form a high opinion, and whose future elevation he foretold. When he saw his predictions thus verified, it was only natural that he should feel great interest in Sabagádis, and should keep up friendly relations with him. Hence it arose that, in 1828, Coffin, in concert with a Dankáli chief named Ali, was sent by Sabagádis to Bombay and Egypt, and afterwards

to England, to negotiate for a supply of arms ; but, while he was still absent on this mission, Sabagádis was, in 1831, attacked by the united forces of his rivals, Ras Marye (Guksa's son and successor) and Dedjatj Ubye of Semyen, by whom he was defeated, made captive, and put to death. After this, Ubye assumed the government of Tigre, in addition to his own hereditary province of Semyen ; and he continued to rule over both as an independent sovereign until the year 1855, becoming soon so powerful as to be able to contend with Ras Ali for the supreme dominion.

Marye, who was killed in the same battle as Sabagádis, was succeeded as Ras by his brother Dori, the dignity thus continuing hereditary in Guksa's family ; and Dori having died shortly afterwards, he was succeeded by his nephew Ali, who continued to rule in Amhara until recently, when, as will be related in the sequel, the same superior power overwhelmed both him and his rival, Ubye of Tigre.

Various circumstances, which need not here be adverted to, but especially the fact that Sabagádis was most favourably disposed to everything English, induced the Church Missionary Society to establish a mission in Abyssinia. All the missionaries were either Germans or Swiss, the first of them being Dr. Gobat, now Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, who arrived in Tigre towards the end of 1829 ; and the mission continued till 1838, when (as is stated in Bishop Gobat's 'Journal of a Three Years' Residence in Abyssinia'), "through the influence of certain members of the Church of Rome, opposition was raised against the missionaries by the Abyssinian priests, and they were compelled to quit the country and return to Egypt."

There is no question that Bishop Gobat is substantially right in this assertion. Still it is not less certain that other causes likewise operated. For the fact cannot be concealed, that, after the death of Sabagádis, the sympathies of the Protestant missionaries were entirely with their late protector's family, who, instead of submitting to the conqueror Ubye, continued for many years in open hostilities against him. And when, in the year 1832, shortly after Sabagádis's death, the Englishman Coffin arrived at Massowah with a large number of muskets, as a present from the British Government to that chief; instead of keeping them back altogether, as the prince for whom they were destined was then no more, or else handing them over to Ubye as the ruler *de facto* of Tigre (in which he would only have followed the precedent of his patron, Mr. Salt, with respect to the presents destined in 1810 for the titular Emperor), Coffin gave a considerable portion of those muskets to the sons and relatives of Sabagádis, who were in arms against Ubye, and so enabled them to withstand him for many years. Added to this, Coffin attached himself personally to the interests of the family of Sabagádis, and is generally understood to have led them to look for assistance from England, and thus to continue their fruitless attempts to acquire the sovereignty of Tigre. Under such circumstances, it may readily be believed that Ubye and his adherents were not likely to befriend the *English* missionaries, who, hoping perhaps that the relatives of Sabagádis would eventually gain the upper hand, certainly took no pains to conciliate the ruling powers either in Church or State.

The Roman Catholic mission, which was established on

the expulsion of the Protestant clergymen by Padre Giuseppe Sapeto, had for its head Padre de' Jacobis, a Neapolitan of noble family, under whose able direction it soon took deep root in Abyssinia, where it still flourishes, notwithstanding the disgrace and subsequent death of its able and accomplished chief, who, in addition to his zeal for the spread of his faith, was the prince of political intriguers.

When the Protestant missionaries were expelled from Tigre in 1838, they directed their steps towards Shoa, where they arrived in the following year, and established their mission under the most favourable auspices. But hardly were they settled, when they were troubled by the appearance of M. Rochet (afterwards French Consul at Djidda), who soon ingratiated himself with King Sáhela Selásye, and was sent by that monarch, in March 1840, with presents to King Louis Philippe.

At that particular juncture, the participation of England and France in the disputes between the Sultan and his powerful vassal, Mohammed Ali, Pasha of Egypt, threatened to cause hostilities between those two Powers; and the British Government, again alive to the importance of Abyssinia in such an event, lost no time in sending to Shoa a mission under the direction of Major (afterwards Sir William) Harris.

This mission arrived in Shoa in July 1841, six months after I had reached that country, whither I had proceeded from Aden by the way of Tadjurrah (the road followed by Major Harris), taking with me, as my servant, a young Dankáli named Hussein, or Samuel Georgis, who is the son of the chief Ali, Mr. Coffin's companion in 1838, and who has recently become known, in connexion with the

unfortunate British captives, as "Samuel, the Emperor's steward."

It is needless to dilate on the objects and proceedings of Major Harris's mission, or on its lamentable failure. It will be sufficient to say that scarcely had the British envoy concluded a treaty of amity and commerce with the King of Shoa, by which the latter engaged to respect the persons and property of British subjects, than the Rev. J. L. Krapf, a Church missionary established in that country since 1839, who in March 1842 had undertaken a journey into Northern Abyssinia, was prevented by the King from passing through the coast lands of the Dankáli tribes, on his return to Shoa by the way of Tadjurrah, in November of the same year—and this in spite of the representations of the British envoy, who was also unable to save from confiscation the property which Mr. Krapf had left in Shoa; and that shortly afterwards the English mission left the country and returned to Bombay.

It may be regarded as mere surplusage to add that the Protestant Church mission in Shoa was abandoned.

CHAPTER II.

COPTIC ABUNA—PROTESTANT AND ROMAN CATHOLIC RIVALRY—
 FRENCH AND ENGLISH IN THE RED SEA—FATE OF LORD PAL-
 MERSTON'S LETTER—MR. COFFIN'S MISSION—BRITISH CONSU-
 LATE—MR. BELL AND CONSUL PLOWDEN—TREATY BETWEEN
 ENGLAND AND ABYSSINIA—ITS IMPOLICY—CONSUL PLOWDEN'S
 REPORT—FRONTIER TRIBES—RAIDS OF TURCO-EGYPTIANS INTO
 BOGOS—CONSUL PLOWDEN'S INTERFERENCE—APPROVAL OF
 BRITISH GOVERNMENT—CONTINUED AGGRESSIONS OF EGYPT—
 SLAVE TRADE.

SUCH was the unsuccessful issue of our relations, both religious and political, with Southern Abyssinia; more fortunate, however, than those with Northern Abyssinia, inasmuch as they had no *consequences*, as the latter had—consequences which have been in operation till the present day, and unhappily have not yet come to an end.

The seed of all the troubles that have arisen was sown by the expulsion of the Protestant missionaries from Tigre in 1838, and the establishment there of a Roman Catholic mission. The first fruit of that seed was produced within two years afterwards, in the circumstances attending the nomination and consecration of the present Abúna or Bishop of Abyssinia. According to the constitution of the Church of that country, which is said to have been established by Abúna Tekla Háimanot, the last native bishop in the thirteenth century, the Abyssinian Church receives its bishop from the see of St. Mark, in the person of a Coptic priest consecrated by the Patriarch of Alexandria. In the year 1840, when the metropolitan see of Abyssinia had been vacant thirteen or fourteen years, Dedjatj Ubye

of Tigre, with a view to his own aggrandizement at the cost of his rival Ras Ali, sent a mission to Cairo to obtain the consecration of a new Abuna. The expenses of such a mission are necessarily great, inasmuch as, besides the customary presents to the Coptic Patriarch, the consent of the Turkish Government, through the Pasha of Egypt, has likewise to be obtained by purchase; which (it may be remarked) is adduced as a proof that the Abyssinians themselves are vassals of the Porte.

The interpreter to this mission was Padre de' Jacobis, who hoped, through the influence of the representatives of the Roman Catholic powers in Egypt, to obtain the appointment of a candidate favourable to their Church. But, as is related by Mr. Isenberg, one of Dr. Gobat's successors in the Protestant mission in Abyssinia, "with a view to strengthen the friendly connexion between the Coptic (as also the Abyssinian) and the English Churches, the Patriarch's choice fell upon a young man who promised well for that purpose, on account of his having passed several years in the school of the English Church Missionary Society at Cairo. His name was Andraos, and he received at his consecration the name of Abba Salama, in remembrance of Frumentius, the apostle of the Abyssinians, who had borne the same name in the Church" *.

Defeated in Egypt, Padre de' Jacobis, accompanied by several Abyssinians, proceeded to Rome, where he established certain relations, which will be more particularly alluded to in the sequel †.

For a long time Abba Salama was an uncompromising

* *Abessinien und die evangelische Kirche* (Bonn, 1844), vol. ii. p. 145.

† See page 41.

supporter of the Protestant party in Abyssinia, in opposition to that of the Church of Rome ; and he is understood to have been for several years a pensioner of that party, through Consul Plowden during his lifetime, and after his death, for a short time longer, through M. Barroni, Mr. Plowden's agent at Massowah. Seeing the venal character of the prelate, this was doubtless the most effectual way to secure his partisanship ; and there is no reason for believing that his exertions were not at all times proportioned to the benefit he derived from them.

It is not easy to gain so clear an insight into the various intrigues in Abyssinia of the agents of the Church of Rome and of the Government of France, which appear to have been systematically and silently carried on from the commencement of the present century. In my pamphlet, 'The French and English in the Red Sea,' published in 1862, I have endeavoured to give a summary of the actions of both establishments, which for all practical purposes may, in their objects and interests, be regarded as similar if not absolutely identical ; like as in a general way are those of England and Protestantism.

But there is one instance of this common action which cannot be passed over without special notice. In the year 1839, M. Antoine d'Abbadie, a well-known traveller in Abyssinia, was the bearer of two letters from Hatsye Sáhela Dengel, the nominal Emperor at Gondar, the one to the English and the other to the French Government. These letters, in the character of an Englishman in England and of a Frenchman in France, he delivered to Viscount Palmerston and Marshal Soult, from both of whom he received "appropriate answers," with which he returned to

Abyssinia in the beginning of 1840. The letter from Marshal Soult duly reached its destination: that from Lord Palmerston was retained by M. d'Abbadie in his possession for a considerable time, and was eventually delivered over to Captain Haines, the British political agent at Aden. The subsequent fate of this letter from Lord Palmerston to the Emperor of Abyssinia is not material to the present narrative; but I may be permitted to mention, on account of my personal connexion with it, that after it had passed three times before my eyes, at Suez, at Aden, and at Ankober, it was, on its fourth appearance, at Yejubbi, in South-western Abyssinia, on February 10th, 1843, committed to the flames by the messenger by whom it had been brought to me from Major Harris, but from whom I refused to receive it. The circumstances connected with this letter of Lord Palmerston's are, however, so singular and instructive, that I have thought it well to print, in the Appendix to the present work, a letter which I addressed on the subject to Earl Russell, on July 22nd, 1865.

Subsequently to this correspondence between the Emperor Sáhela Dengel and Viscount Palmerston, which, as is evident, led to no practical result, the next attempt towards a renewal of political relations between Abyssinia and England (as we are informed by Earl Russell*) was made by Ras Ubye, who, in the year 1841, sent Mr. Coffin † with a letter and presents to Her Majesty. On

* * Despatch to Col. Stanton of October 5, 1865, in Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence respecting the British Captives in Abyssinia,' p. 61.

† Lord Russell describes Mr. Coffin as "an English traveller," which is evidently a misnomer.

Mr. Coffin's arrival in Egypt he was informed through Colonel Barnett, the British Consul-General there, that he need not proceed further on his journey to England, but that he might deliver to Colonel Barnett any letter with which he was charged. Mr. Coffin accordingly delivered the letter from Ras Ubye, together with presents, to Colonel Barnett, who sent the letter to England; but it is not known whether the presents were also sent, the only allusion to them being found in a despatch from Colonel Barnett, dated September 1841, in which he says they were still with Mr. Coffin at Cairo. No reply, however, was returned to this letter; in consequence of which Ras Ubye was so angry that he threatened violence to Mr. Coffin for not bringing him a return present from the Queen.

According to Mr. Isenberg*, the only practical result of Mr. Coffin's mission was the obtaining for the newly-consecrated Abuna, Abba Salama, a passage from Suez to Massowah in the British vessel 'Colombo.'

Nothing further has to be noticed till 1847, when a British Consulate was established in Abyssinia. The idea of establishing such a Consulate did not originate in any political object, but in consequence of a suggestion made by me in 1846 as to the obtaining of agricultural labourers from Abyssinia" †; and I was given to understand that Viscount Palmerston had it in contemplation to appoint me to the post. But Mr. Walter Plowden happened to return to England from Abyssinia, where he had been re-

* *Op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 60.

† See Parliamentary Papers relative to Distress in Sugar-growing Colonies: H. L., 1848, No. 250, pp. 810 to 948, *passim*.

sident nearly five years with Mr. John G. Bell, previously an officer in the Indian navy, bringing presents from Ras Ali and proposals for an alliance, and he received the appointment. At that period Baalgada Araia, a grandson of Aito Debbib, mentioned by Mr. Salt as Ras Walda Selásye's favourite brother, and also nephew to Mr. Salt's friend Sabagádis, had been for some time in arms against Ubye. The traditional sympathies of the two Englishmen might have induced them to take part with the Baalgada ("Governor of the Salt Plain") against Ubye; but, as his was manifestly the losing side, they had passed on into Amhara and attached themselves to Ras Ali, Ubye's great rival. When Mr. Plowden came to England in 1847, he left his comrade Bell holding the rank of general in the Ras's army; and when he returned in 1848 as Consul, he was the bearer of presents from the British Government to their friend Ras Ali.

Though Consul Plowden may not himself have entered the service of the Ras as his companion Bell had done, he organized a body of musketeers, the firelocks for whom he procured from Aden; and, as in former times the commander of the matchlock-men in the Emperor's service had the title of Basha*, Mr. Plowden was at first generally known as Basha Buláden, as his name was pronounced by the natives, which name, by dropping the nunnation, soon became Basha Bulád. This appellation, of which the

* "The *Basha*, an officer introduced by Melec Segued, in imitation of the Turks. . . . The function of the person so called was to command the Mahometan musqueteers, then introduced into the household troops. He . . . is usually a gentleman of approved valour, who heads a division of the infantry."—Bruce's 'Travels,' 3rd edit. vol. iii. p. 25; note by Dr. Murray.

literal meaning (curiously enough) is "General Gunlock," became in the result the usual designation of the English Consul, it being applied to Mr. Plowden's successor as well as to himself*.

In November 1849, Consul Plowden and Ras Ali, as representing the titular Emperor, concluded a treaty of friendship and commerce †, one of the articles of which stipulated that the two Sovereigns should respectively receive and protect any ambassador, envoy, or consul whom the other should appoint; and by the 17th article His Majesty of Abyssinia agreed "that in all cases when a British subject should be accused of any crime committed in any part of His Majesty's dominions, the accused should be tried and adjudged by the British Consul, or other officer duly appointed for that purpose by Her Britannic Majesty;" and, further, that the British Consul should have jurisdiction in disputes in which British subjects were concerned, in like manner as generally in the Levant.

It was further stipulated that the Sovereigns of England and Abyssinia should "respectively, to the best of their power, endeavour to keep open and to secure the avenues of approach betwixt the sea-coast and Abyssinia;" which, as Ubye, the virtually independent ruler of Tigre, possessed

* Mr. Stern says, in page 97 of his 'Wanderings among the Falashas,' "The report that a successor to the assassinated Consul Plowden had arrived created quite a stir." The people "repaired in a mass to the road to welcome in a becoming style the new *bache boulad*." Mr. Stern does not appear to have had the least conception of the meaning of this strange name for an English Consul.

† Treaty, November 2nd, 1849; British ratification delivered to the Ras of Abyssinia March 1st, 1852; laid before Parliament June 1852.

and commanded those "avenues of approach" and was at enmity with Ali, whilst Massowah and the entire seaboard belonged to the Turks, might be construed into a treaty offensive and defensive against both Ubye and the Ottoman Porte.

The impolicy of this line of conduct on the part of the British Government and their representative was distinctly pointed out by me to Viscount Palmerston in a letter addressed to him as Foreign Secretary on April 4th, 1848, shortly after Consul Plowden's departure for his post. This letter is printed in the Appendix to the present work. On its contents I will now only remark, that had the example of Mr. Salt been followed, as I so strongly recommended, the present calamitous state of affairs in Abyssinia could not have arisen.

Mr. Plowden himself appears to have discovered, when it was unfortunately too late, that little benefit was likely to accrue either to England or to Abyssinia from this Treaty between the two nations; and he candidly confessed in his letter to Earl Granville of June 20th, 1852, written shortly after Her Majesty's ratification of that Treaty had been delivered to Ras Ali, as the representative of the Emperor, that no efforts of his could annihilate the 3000 miles that interpose between the two countries, or "the more fatal barrier of the Turkish domination along the line of coast"*.

And in his 'Remarks on the Social System of Abyssinia, in some points bearing upon the Treaty lately concluded,' Mr. Plowden states that "Dedjatj Ubye of Semyen, by having added by conquest the whole of Tigre and other provinces, had become in point of war-

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 1.

like equipments fully the equal of the Ras, *possessed every avenue leading from the interior*, and acted in every respect as an independent sovereign"*; thereby virtually admitting that the Treaty, of which an express stipulation was "to endeavour to keep open and to secure the avenues of approach betwixt the sea-coast and Abyssinia," ought to have been concluded with Ubye rather than with his enemy Ali.

What, on the other hand, the value of an alliance with Ubye might have been may be judged from Mr. Plowden's description of that able and powerful prince, given at a shortly subsequent date in a 'Statement of our present Relations with Northern Abyssinia,' dated March 23, 1853:—"The present Ras, though no other chief is powerful enough to encounter him in the field, can only retain his title by the maintenance of a large army and constant wars against his rebellious vassals. Of all the inferior chiefs, whose title is Dedjazmatj†, the greatest is Dedjatj Ubye, who, partly by the concurrence of the Ras, and more by subtlety, fortune, and the force of arms,

* *Ibid.* p. 2.

† This title is so variously spelled that it is deserving of a few words of explanation. It is compounded of two words, *Dedj*, a "gate" or "door," and *Azmatj*, a "leader" (*dux*) or "general;" and it means the commander of that portion of the army which protects the door of the Emperor: consequently the commander of the centre or main body; *Kañ-Azmatj* and *Ger'-Azmatj* being respectively the commanders of the right and left wings of the army. These designations have however now become territorial distinctions and almost mere titles of honour: *Dedj-azmatj*, as governor of a province, may be regarded as equivalent to our *Duke*. The language of Tigre not possessing the sounds *dj*, *tj*, the word becomes *Degasmati*, by some Europeans written *Kasmati* or *Gusmati*. Before a proper name it is contracted to *Dedjatj* or *Dejus*.

governs with absolute sway the country from near the coast of the Red Sea to Gondar, and from Lasta to Sennaar; the only conditions that should prevent him from being regarded as an independent sovereign being his title of Dedjazmatj held from the Ras and the payment of a tribute of money to him yearly as his feudal superior: otherwise the Ras does not interfere with his rule over these vast provinces, *by which he commands every avenue to the interior of the country available for trade or policy*”*.

In reply to Consul Plowden's communications of June 20, 1852, and March 23, 1853, the Earl of Clarendon, who was then Foreign Secretary, replied on October 3, 1853:—“Her Majesty's Government were led by the representations formerly made by you to expect that advantage would result to British interests from the conclusion of a treaty with the rulers of Abyssinia, and from the establishment of a British Consulate in that country. It appears, however, from your reports now before me, that there is little reason to expect that such will be the case.

“Nevertheless, Her Majesty's Government having concluded the treaty and established the Consulate, are reluctant to renounce all hope of benefit from those measures; but their means of obtaining in this country information on which to act are necessarily very limited; and I must have recourse to you for a report as to the possibility of your establishing yourself either at Massowah or any other place on the sea-coast where you may retain an influence on the rulers of Abyssinia, and facilitate

* ‘Further Correspondence,’ p. 4.

communication with the provinces under their government''*.

From the papers laid before Parliament, it does not appear what steps were taken by Mr. Plowden in pursuance of Lord Clarendon's instructions. But one result of these instructions was a long and valuable report, giving, as it states, 'a Sketch of the Laws, Customs, Government, and Position of Abyssinia, with a short account of its Neighbours'†; the contents of which report are so exceedingly interesting and instructive, that it is deeply to be regretted that such precious matter should have been allowed to remain for more than twelve years hidden and seemingly forgotten in the archives of the Foreign Office.

In his report, Mr. Plowden describes at considerable length the tribes surrounding Abyssinia on all sides. Referring to that report for further details, it will be sufficient for my present purpose to state here that along the edge of the Abyssinian plateau, towards the north and north-west, are several tribes, the sovereignty over whom has long been debatable between Abyssinia and Egypt. Some of them, who profess Christianity, have for many years been under the protection of England; and the British Consul-General in Egypt has more than once been under the necessity of remonstrating with the Egyptian Government on account of aggressions or other ill-treatment.

In speaking of these frontier tribes, Mr. Plowden says, "The divisions of Bogos, Senhait, Bidjúk, and all the others near Hamasyen, still hold out after having been

* 'Further Correspondence,' p. 5.

† *Ibid.* pp. 6-41

twice plundered: the details of the last expedition have been furnished in my despatches.”

Though the despatches furnishing these details have not been laid before Parliament, we have the means of obtaining elsewhere the particulars of the expedition alluded to by Consul Plowden, on the testimony of an eye-witness, namely, Mr. James Hamilton, in his work ‘Sinai, the Hedjaz, and Soudan,’ published in 1857.

After describing how the Egyptian Government had step by step acquired possession of the Arab districts surrounding Abyssinia on the north, and particularly the province of Taka, of which the capital, Kassalah, has become the residence of the Egyptian governor, Mr. Hamilton relates how the soldiers of the garrison are “employed by the Government, in conjunction with the border Arabs, in the iniquitous raids into Abyssinia, which furnish a considerable part of the revenues of the province. This year (1854), in the latter part of January, they made a successful incursion into the territory of the Bogos, carrying away three hundred and forty individuals, men, women, and children, all Christians, and eighteen hundred beeves. Of these one half fell to the share of the Arabs, the other half was carried to the account of the Government, which sold a part by auction, and distributed the others, on account of their arrears of pay, to the officers and other *employés*. This is the usual way in which the produce of these man-stealing, freebooting expeditions is turned to account; the slaves and the cattle are ranged in categories, according to their estimated values, and then distributed instead of pay to the *employés*, and even to the troops.

“ An Italian missionary, named Giovanni Stella *, from whose congregation sixteen of these poor wretches had been carried off, followed them here (to Kassalah) in hopes of rescuing them. The Governor only laughed at his demand when he claimed the liberation of the three hundred and forty freeborn Abyssinians who had been carried into slavery; and when he afterwards limited himself to requiring those who belonged to his own flock, offering even to pay the price at which they were valued, it was equally in vain I can find no words to express the feelings of indignation which the recital of these atrocities filled me with. Had its victims been Pagans, the crime was atrocious; but they were Christians, and therefore more entitled to secure our sympathies.

“ After our departure from Kassalah, the English Consul at Massowah came here to investigate the matter; and though his representations to the Governor were met with insult as well as refusal, I have still some faint hope that justice may be obtained. But this country is too remote from European eyes to make one sanguine that any real satisfaction will be given, however fair the promises with which the Pasha may seek to gain time or delude the European authorities in Cairo. The Egyptian Government has long had designs upon Abyssinia. . . . Notwithstanding the stipulations made three years ago by the European Powers, to prevent aggression on the Abys-

* Padre Stella is still stationed in Bogos. He went to France last year, it is said, on account of the continued aggressions of Egypt. He returned to Abyssinia in the beginning of the present year, in the suite of the newly consecrated French Roman Catholic Bishop, Msgr. Bel (the first of his nation in Abyssinia), who at once proceeded with him to visit the mission at Keren, in Bogos.

sinian frontiers, there is every reason to believe that the Pasha, whose obstinacy of purpose is only equalled by the cunning with which he has circumvented more than one Frank diplomatist, has by no means changed his views”*.

In a note in a subsequent page, written at Cairo on August 5th, 1854, Mr. Hamilton says, “A few days after we left Kassalah, H.M. Consul at Massowah arrived to inquire into and report upon the recent outrages on the frontier. He met with even a colder reception than ourselves: the Mudir (governor) forbade the Arabs to carry letters for him, forbade the public writers to write for him, in fact, completely excommunicated him—a penalty in which our worthy host, Mr. Kotzika, was also involved. It was necessary to go a journey of two days to reach a tribe not dependent on the Mudir, in order to forward his correspondence. The usual system of promises and evasion was, of course, resorted to in Cairo, to excuse the culprit, who no doubt had only acted on Abbas Pasha’s instructions; and it was only after that monster’s death, that H.M. Consul-General obtained from the present Viceroy (Said Pasha) satisfaction, by Chosrew Bey’s dismissal” †.

That Consul Plowden’s proceedings on behalf of the frontier tribes of Abyssinia were entirely approved by the British Government at home, is established by the following passage in Lord Clarendon’s despatch to that officer, dated November 27, 1855:—“Her Majesty’s Government have latterly remonstrated in the strongest terms against the intentions of the Viceroy of Egypt to attack Abyssinia; and the present Viceroy (Said Pasha) has not only put a stop to such proceedings, and has confined

* *Op. cit.* pp. 246-248.

† *Ibid.* p. 252.

himself within his own dominions, but he has set free the Abyssinian prisoners reduced to slavery by his predecessor" *.

Notwithstanding the assurance thus given of the good intentions of the then ruling Viceroy, it is quite certain that the atrocious aggressions on the Abyssinian frontier districts, so vividly depicted by Mr. Hamilton, were in no wise intermitted. When Said Pasha himself was in England in 1862, he told the President of the Royal Geographical Society, Sir Roderick I. Murchison, that the frontiers of his dominions towards the south were very elastic; and there is evidence of their having been steadily pushed forward in the direction of Abyssinia, as in every other. It may be quite true that, on the part of the Abyssinians themselves, there has been no lack of hostile feeling, and that they likewise have lost no opportunity of harassing the Egyptians and the tribes submitted to them. Such is always the case in border warfare, and it would probably be often difficult to decide which of the two parties was the aggressor.

However this may be, an inevitable result of these constant feuds between the Mohammedans and Christians along the frontiers has been the capture, both in war and by stealth, of numerous Christian Abyssinians, who are sold into slavery. When I was last at Massowah, I heard that the Slave Trade was still carried on there and at Arkiko to some extent. How it is in the interior may be gathered from the preceding pages, and also from Consul Cameron's report to Consul General Colquhoun of May 20th, 1863 †.

* 'Further Correspondence,' p. 47.

† *Ibid.* p. 60.

· CHAPTER III.

KASSAI OF KWARA—HIS RISE TO POWER—CONQUEST OF AMHARA, GODJAM, AND TIGRE—CROWNED AS THEODORE, EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA—HIS CHARACTER—GREAT REFORMS—AMBITIOUS PROJECTS—RELIGIOUS INTRIGUES—BANISHMENT OF ROMAN CATHOLICS—THE THEODORE OF PROPHECY—ROMAN CATHOLIC PRETENDER AT ROME—THEODORE SET UP BY THE COPTIC ABUNA—HIS BELIEF IN HIS DIVINE MISSION—SUBSEQUENT CHANGE OF CHARACTER AND CONDUCT.

WHILST Consul Plowden was thus occupied on the northern frontiers of Abyssinia, an important change occurred in the government and political condition of that country, which cannot be better described than in the words of that officer in his report on the subject, contained in his despatch to the Earl of Clarendon, dated Gondar, June 25th, 1855.

“In my last report I represented Northern Abyssinia, independently of Shoa, as being ruled by three chiefs, who were generally at variance with each other, and whose feudal vassals were most often in a state of secret or open rebellion. A remarkable man has now appeared, who, under the title of Negūs or King Theodorus*, has united the whole of Northern Abyssinia under his authority, and

* I cannot see any reason for using this Latin form. The native name is *Teōdēros* or *Teódros*, from the Greek *Θεόδωρος*, with the accent on the antepenultimate. We ought to use either the native name or the English form Theodore. I have altered the name throughout, and have likewise corrected in some instances the spelling of native names; adopting, generally, the system of Sir William Jones, as recommended by the Royal Geographical Society.

has established tolerable tranquillity, considering the shortness of his career and the hazardous wars in which he has been and is still engaged.

“From his earliest youth, Dedjatj Kassai regarded his present elevation as assuredly destined, but concealed his designs with prudence equal to his daring until ripe for execution. First he denied the authority of the Queen, mother of Ras Ali, under whom he governed the provinces near Sennaar; defeated in succession all the troops she could send against him, and lastly herself with tenfold his numbers: he protested, however, that he was still the faithful servant of Ras Ali, but refused to surrender except on certain conditions of peace. The Ras then sent against him an immense force; the armies camped opposite to each other for some time, the Ras not wishing to drive matters to extremity; and in the interval Kassai fought several minor battles, detected and punished some traitors in his own camp, and introduced a little discipline into his army.

“The Ras having sworn to do him no injury, he surrendered and came to Debra Tabor, where he so completely lulled all suspicion that he received all his former honours and provinces from the Ras, the queen being in a measure disgraced. He returned to Kawra and attacked all the low countries towards Sennaar [inhabited by] Shan-kalas or Arabs, accustoming his soldiers to war and hardships.

“His projects not being yet matured, on several occasions when it was confidently reported that he had rebelled, he baffled his accusers by suddenly appearing in the Ras’s camp, and following him to war in Godjam with

about a third of his forces, thus quite winning his heart, though I ventured to point out to the Ras his dangerous character.

“At last, about two years and a half ago, he threw off the mask, and the Ras having sent against him Dedjatj Goshu, that prince was defeated and slain in battle.

“The Ras now became seriously alarmed, and ordered half his army under his best commanders to attack him; he also called upon Dedjatj Ubye, chief of Tigre, for assistance, and that prince furnished a very large contingent. Though numbers were so overwhelming against him, Dedjatj Kassai met these forces and gave them a signal defeat, killing most of the chiefs; shortly after he took the daring resolution of attacking the Ras, and arriving by forced marches near the camp of that prince in Godjam in the rainy season, sent him a defiance, and met him, though so far superior in cavalry, in the open plains. The Ras fought with the utmost courage in person; the loss of life was considerable on both sides; but Kassai’s determined valour again won the day, Ras Ali escaping.

“He then retired from Godjam, and afforded to Biru Goshu, who had been for five years besieged by the Ras in his mountain fort of Somma, an opportunity of leaving that stronghold.

“During some months Dedjatj Kassai remained tranquil, amusing Dedjatj Ubye at first with friendly proposals, afterwards demanding of that chief the Abuna, Abba Salama, who had been banished by Ras Ali, with menaces in case of non-compliance. Ubye, becoming alarmed, sent first his son with proposals, and, subsequently the

Abuna ; the latter was reinstated in his dignity at Gondar, and a peace was made between the chiefs. Dedjatj Kassai then pursued Biru Goshu even to the Galla provinces, where he had assembled a large force, defeated and took him prisoner.

“ He was now strong in guns and troops, and on his return camped in the province of Woggora, from whence he declared war against Ubye, reproaching him with his falsehood, which was proved, in having sent letters to encourage Biru Goshu. With some reluctance Ubye at last put himself in motion to oppose Dedjatj Kassai, who had advanced into Semyen ; the latter, by forced marches, fell suddenly upon his rival, and in two hours defeated him, taking prisoner all his sons and generals with himself ; without delay he invested Ubye's strongholds, which surrendered at once.

“ The fruits of this last victory were large treasures accumulated for three generations, the submission or imprisonment of almost all the chiefs in Abyssinia, and the coronation of Dedjatj Kassai by the Abuna, Abba Salama, under the title of Theódoros, King of Kings of Ethiopia.

“ Discovering a plot against his life, the King only placed in durance those concerned, displaying in all things great clemency and generosity, and the ransom of Dedjatj Ubye was fixed at 120,000 dollars.

“ With scarce a week's delay, and in spite of the murmurs of his soldiers, the King marched against the Mohammedan Gallas, who had, during his absence, burnt some churches, and assembled all the forces of Christian Abyssinia, Tigre included, in the province of Dalánta, on the borders of Worrahémano, where I found him.

“ He may have from 50,000 to 60,000 men of all arms.

“ Such has been his adventurous and warlike career. I shall now say a few words on his personal character, the reforms he has effected, the designs he is contemplating, and the condition and prospects of the country.

“ The King Theodoros is young in years, vigorous in all manly exercises, of a striking countenance, peculiarly polite and engaging when pleased, and mostly displaying great tact and delicacy. He is persuaded that he is destined to restore the glories of the Ethiopian empire, and to achieve great conquests: of untiring energy, both mental and bodily, his personal and moral daring are boundless. The latter is well proved by his severity towards his soldiers, even when these, pressed by hunger, are mutinous, and he is in front of a powerful foe; more so even by his pressing reforms in a country so little used to any yoke, whilst engaged in unceasing hostilities, and his suppression of the power of the great feudal chiefs, at a moment when any inferior man would have sought to conciliate them as the stepping-stones to empire.

“ When aroused his wrath is terrible, and all tremble; but at all moments he possesses a perfect self-command. Indefatigable in business, he takes little repose night or day: his ideas and language are clear and precise; hesitation is not known to him; and he has neither counsellors nor go-betweens. He is fond of splendour, and receives in state even on a campaign. He is unsparing in punishment—very necessary to restrain disorder, and to restore order in such a wilderness as Abyssinia. He salutes his meanest subject with courtesy; is sincerely though often mistakenly religious, and will acknowledge a

fault committed toward his poorest follower in a moment of passion with sincerity and grace.

“ He is generous to excess, and free from all cupidity, regarding nothing with pleasure or desire but munitions of war for his soldiers. He has hitherto exercised the utmost clemency toward the vanquished, treating them rather as his friends than his enemies. His faith is signal: without Christ, he says, I am nothing; if he has destined me to purify and reform this distracted kingdom, with His aid who shall stay me: nay, sometimes he is on the point of not caring for human assistance at all, and this is one reason why he will not seek with much avidity for assistance from or alliance with Europe.

“ The worst points in his character are, his violent anger at times, his unyielding pride as regards his kingly and divine right, and his fanatical religious zeal.

“ He has begun to reform even the dress of Abyssinia, all about his person wearing loose flowing trowsers and upper and under vests, instead of the half-naked costume introduced by the Gallas. Married himself at the altar and strictly continent, he has ordered or persuaded all who love him to follow his example, and exacts the greatest decency of manners and conversation: this system he hopes to extend to all classes.

“ He has suppressed the Slave Trade in all its phases, save that the slaves already bought may be sold to such Christians as shall buy them for charity: setting the example, he pays to the Mussulman dealers what price they please to ask for the slaves they bring to him, and then baptizes them.

“ He has abolished the barbarous practice of delivering

over murderers to the relatives of the deceased, handing over offenders, in public, to his own executioners to be shot or decapitated.

“The arduous task of breaking the power of the great feudal Chiefs—a task achieved in Europe only during the reigns of many consecutive Kings—he has commenced by chaining almost all who were dangerous, avowing his intention of liberating them when his power shall be consolidated. He has placed the soldiers of the different provinces under the command of his own trusty followers, to whom he has given high titles, but no power to judge or punish ; thus, in fact, creating generals in place of feudal Chieftains more proud of their birth than of their monarch, and organizing a new nobility, a legion of honour dependent on himself, and chosen specially for their daring and fidelity.

“To these he gives sums of money from time to time, accustoming them to his intention of establishing a regular pay ; his matchlock-men are numbered under officers commanding from 100 to 1000, and the King drills them in person. In the common soldiers he has effected a great reform, by paying them, and ordering them to purchase their food, but in no way to harass and plunder the peasant as before ; the peasantry he is gradually accustoming to live quiet under the village judge, and to look no more to military rule. As regards commerce, he has put an end to a number of vexatious exactions, and has ordered that duties shall be levied only at three places in his dominions. All these matters cannot yet be perfected, but he intends also to disarm the people, and to establish a regular standing army, armed with muskets only ; having

declared that he will convert swords and lances into ploughshares and reaping-hooks, and cause a plough-ox to be sold dearer than the noblest war-horse.

“ He has begun to substitute letters for verbal messages. After perusing the history of the Jesuits in Abyssinia, he has decided that no Roman Catholic priests shall teach in his dominions ; and insisting on his right divine over those born his subjects, has ordered the Abyssinians who have adopted that creed to recant. To foreigners of all classes, however, he permits the free exercise of their religion, but prohibits all preaching contrary to the doctrine of the Coptic Church. To the Mohammedans he has declared that he will first conquer the Gallas, who have seized on Christian lands, devastated churches, and by force converted the inhabitants to Islamism ; and after that, the Mussulmans now residing in Abyssinia will have the option of being baptized or of leaving the country.

“ He is peculiarly jealous, as may be expected, of his sovereign rights, and of anything that appears to trench on them : he wishes, in a short time, to send embassies to the great European Powers to treat with them on equal terms. The most difficult trait in his character is this jealousy and the pride that, fed by ignorance, renders it impossible for him yet to believe that so great a monarch as himself exists in the world.

“ In his present campaign he proposes to subdue or exterminate the Mohammedan Gallas, and perhaps Shoa. Next year he will devote to the settlement of Tigre, including the tribes along the coast, and meditates the occupation of Massowah. After that he wishes to reclaim all the provinces lately conquered by Egypt along his

northern frontier, and even Khartoum, as his by right: nor does his military ardour hesitate to dream of the conquest of Egypt and a triumphant march to the Holy Sepulchre.

“Some of his ideas may be imperfect, others impracticable; but a man, who, rising from the clouds of Abyssinian ignorance and childishness *without assistance and without advice**, has done so much and contemplates such large designs, cannot be regarded as of an ordinary stamp.”

The character thus attributed to the Emperor Theodore by Consul Plowden was evidently written with a most friendly pen. Several circumstances connected with his rise to power have been omitted, especially those relating to his final acquisition of the Imperial crown. I give them here as having an important bearing on his subsequent career.

After the defeat of Ras Ali, as is related by Mr. Plowden, Kassai and Ubye, who were then left alone, were found to be pretty evenly matched. To avoid further bloodshed, it was agreed, in February 1854, that a council of the principal chiefs and dignitaries of the empire should decide between the two rivals, who *each bound himself by an oath* to submit to their decision. It being soon apparent that the council were inclined to place Ubye on the throne, and that the Abuna, Abba Salama, was willing to crown him, Kassai intrigued with Padre de' Jacobis (who with the spread of Romanism in Abyssinia had been recognized as Romish bishop under the title of Abuna Yakob) *for the adoption of the faith of Rome by himself and the whole empire*, if Jacobis would crown him Emperor. Having

* From what is stated in page 42, this may be questioned.

gained this point, Kassai suddenly led his army into Ubye's hereditary province of Semyen. The Coptic bishop having declared the perjured Kassai and his soldiers out of the pale of the Church, Kassai intimated to him that, if he could excommunicate, Abuna Yakob could absolve; at the same time leaving the door open for negotiation. The Coptic abuna, entrapped as easily as the Romish bishop had been, at once abandoned Ubye's cause, and agreed to crown Kassai Emperor, on condition that he recognized the Coptic faith as that of the empire, and banished from the country Bishop de' Jacobis and his Romish priests.

Ubye, deprived of most of his moral power by the defection of the Coptic bishop, now marched in pursuit of Kassai. On the 10th February, 1855 *, a pitched battle took place at Deráskye between their two armies, when that of Ubye was completely routed, and he himself was wounded and taken prisoner. Two days afterwards, Kassai was anointed and crowned by the Coptic bishop by the name and title of Theodore, King of the Kings (*i. e.* Emperor) of Ethiopia. This ceremony took place in the church of Deráskye, which Ubye had had built with a view to his own coronation.

Immediately after he had been crowned, Theodoré marched upon Gondar, where he ordered the imperial *negarit* or large kettle-drums to be brought out and beaten in the market-place; and it was proclaimed, in the name of the King of Kings Theodore, that if any one should ever again speak of Dedjatj Kassai, he would have his hands and feet cut off.

In order to show more fully the character of Kassai, and to afford a key to his general conduct, it must be explained

* Mr. Stern gives this as the 4th, M. Lejean as the 5th of February.

that the name of Theodore, assumed by him at his coronation, is that of an Emperor of Abyssinia who flourished during the eleventh century of the Christian era, and who, according to a native prophecy, is, like King Arthur of Britain and Don Sebastian of Portugal, to reign again, and under whom the empire is not only to recover its pristine power and splendour, but Mohammedanism is to be extirpated and the Cross planted in the place of the Crescent at Jerusalem, in which city he is to seat himself on the throne of his ancestor Solomon, the wise King of Israel,

When I passed through Lasta in the year 1843, I acquired a knowledge of the tradition of that kingdom, which differs materially from that of the rest of Abyssinia. According to it, the second Theodore is no other than Nakwetoláab, the last reigning monarch of the native dynasty of Lasta, who abdicated in favour of Yekwena Amlak, the legitimate heir to the throne, and is said to be still alive and wandering about between Jerusalem and the Abyssinian province of Zobul, in expectation of the time when his second reign shall commence, which is to be a sort of millennium.

Whether the present Emperor, when he assumed the name of Theodore, was sincere in the belief that he was the destined sovereign may fairly be questioned. M. Lejean is inclined to regard him as sincere, and asserts that in 1855 the whole of Abyssinia believed in him, even if at the present day the same faith may not be retained.* But this is evidently a misapprehension. In 1855 I had in my service, or was otherwise in communication with, several Abyssinians, some of whom were from Kassai's native province,

* 'Revue des Deux Mondes' (Nov. 1, 1864), vol. liv. p. 235.

Kwara or its immediate vicinity; and they unqualifiedly denied his claim to be the Theodore of prophecy, for the simple but conclusive reason, that Theodore was to come from the *east*, whereas Kassai's place of origin, Kwara, is in the extreme north-*west* of Abyssinia; and besides, we are told by Consul Plowden, in his Report of June 25, 1855, that at that very time a son of Ubye was giving himself out as the destined Theodore, in opposition to Kassai.

That Kassai should have been induced to pass himself off for the Theodore of prophecy may perhaps be accounted for by the following remarkable circumstances.

For upwards of twenty years past there has resided in Rome a certain lady of English extraction, who claims to be a lineal descendant of Menilek, the son of King Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, and who, in the year 1862, printed and published "con permesso" at Rome, a pamphlet setting forth her pretensions, under the title of "Istoriche Incidenze, per mezzo delle quali si prova esistere ancora e fra di noi la linea diretta di Salomone, Rè d'Egitto e de' Giudei."

It is not requisite to discuss the pretensions of this aspirant to the throne of Ethiopia, whose pedigree I possess. It will be sufficient to state that they have been countenanced both at Rome and in Abyssinia; and that when Padre de' Jacobis was in that city, as has been already mentioned, a meeting was held in the Palazzo del Governo Vecchio on September 9th 1841, at which were present this claimant to the throne and other members of her family, together with Padre de' Jacobis and several Abyssinians, one of whom was the Alaka Habta Selásye, and another a former secretary of Dedjatj Sabagádis.

This lady's husband, or one of her two sons, occupies himself with painting sacred pictures for the adornment of the churches of his future empire. When I was in Abyssinia during the present year, I inquired after these paintings, but could not hear of any except two in the Roman Catholic church at Massowah; the one representing the marriage of the Holy Virgin and St. Joseph, with St. Simeon joining their hands, and the other the death of St. Joseph, with the Virgin and infant Jesus attending him. My very brief stay in the island in May last, on my return from the upper country, precluded me from seeing these two pictures, as I had desired to do. I am told that on their frames are set forth the pretensions of the artist to the throne of Ethiopia.

It is not at all improbable that, under favourable circumstances, the Roman Catholic party in Abyssinia would have been, and might still be, prepared to support the claims of this aspirant to the throne of their own faith, who on his side would assuredly be willing to make them every concession in return for their support. Whether it was ever intended that this Roman Catholic pretender should declare himself to be the Theodore of prophecy I cannot say; but the intimate acquaintance of Bishop de' Jacobis with the ancient history of Ethiopia, his mystic and enthusiastic character, and his intriguing disposition, might well have disposed him to originate and encourage such an imposture. As regards, however, the idea of Kas-sai's being the destined sovereign—so to say, on the Coptic and Protestant side,—I have been assured that it was suggested to him by the Abuna—the same train of thought which made that prelate assume to be the representative

of Frumentius and adopt his revered name of Abba Salama, leading him not unnaturally to propose that Kassai should in like manner adopt the name and attributes of the destined restorer of the empire.

Whatever may have been the origin of Kassai's pretensions, and whether at the outset he himself believed in his own claim or not, there can be no doubt that he is now fully convinced of it. So far indeed has he become filled with the idea of his divine mission, that at the time of the defeat and execution of his rival, Negúsyé, in the beginning of 1861, he made the following impious declaration to the clergy of Axum:—"I have made a bargain with God. He has promised not to descend on earth to strike me; and I have promised not to ascend into heaven to fight with him." The madness of this assertion is regarded by M. Lejean* as representing the amount of disquietude caused by the intervention of France on the side of his rival, Negúsyé. Rather is it the result of the intoxication of success, superadded to that arising from the constant habits of excess, which he indulged in before he took on himself the character of the destined monarch of religion, morality, and peace, and which he is known to have resumed since he threw off the mask and reappeared in what must be regarded as his true character.

M. Lejean, who on the whole is not unfavourably disposed towards Theodore, attributes his change of conduct to his being at length worn out by the constant rebellions, which he is unable to quell, and which eventually have given rise to the one sole dark thought that now pervades his soul; and he puts into Theodore's mouth the following

* *Op. cit.* p. 235.

words :—“ God, who raised me from the dust to supplant the legitimate princes, did not perform this miracle without a motive. I have a mission; but what is it? I thought at first that I had to elevate this people by means of prosperity and peace; but, in spite of all the good I have done, I see more rebels raise up their heads than in the time of the worst tyranny. It is evident that I have deceived myself. This people has a hard head, and requires to be chastised before being called to enjoy the blessings of Providence. I now perceive the true part I have to perform: I will be the scourge, the judgement of God on Abyssinia.” And M. Lejean adds that, as the new programme of his reign, he has caused to be engraved on the carriages of his mortars, “Theodore, the Scourge of the Perverse”*.

One of the frightful consequences of this resolution was the laconic general order given by the monarch to his soldiers, “Eat up everything;” under which order fourteen provinces, with a superficies equal to that of Switzerland, were “eaten up,” the one after the other, in the three months from March to June 1863 †.

That M. Lejean has not exaggerated is proved by the following extract from a letter, which I received in 1863, from a person who has had but too many opportunities of forming a correct estimate of the Emperor’s real character :—“Abyssinia, I regret to say, has not improved since my last visit. The King who, in the beginning of his reign, gave great promise that he would introduce a new era of peace and prosperity to this long-distracted and misgoverned empire, has grievously disappointed the general expectation. Infatuated with the idea that he was the chosen

* *Op. cit.* p. 609.

† *Ibid.*

instrument of Heaven to perform exploits that would elicit the world's applause, he led the life of a saint in the camp, and displayed the daring of a hero in battle. As long as success attended his varied enterprises, all was *couleur de rose*; but no sooner did he discover treacheries among his governors and wide-spreading conspiracies among the troops, than *he abandoned the false character he had assumed*, and descended to the common level of all former Abyssinian monarchs. Since his defeat of Agau Negúsyé, the Tigre rebel, who expiated the crime of his ambition by a cruel death, the despot has wasted part of the Wollo-Galla country; and, during the last year, all his forces have been applied to subjugate to obedience the province of Godjam. Tádela Gwalu, who is the leader of the rebels, to forestall any reverse, has intrenched himself on the Ambas Djibella, Mútera and Tsámara, where, it is said, a sufficient quantity of provisions is stored up to last him and his numerous army upwards of fourteen years.

“The persevering resistance of this pretender to the throne has exasperated Theodore to a pitch almost bordering on frenzy. Damot, Agaumider, and part of Dembea, which were suspected of disaffection, have already experienced the severe doom of traitors; and it is said that a similar fate awaits other districts and provinces. The cruel and licentious soldiery, too delighted with the royal licence to plunder, have perpetrated the most revolting deeds of cruelty. Confiscation and rapine have been the lot of the patient and submissive; but wherever any remonstrance was offered, blows, and in scores of instances death, became the punishment. Even churches, which

were hitherto considered inviolable, did not escape the devastating storm.

“ This unprecedented mode of intimidation has awakened horror and detestation among friends and foes ; and it will take years, if the despot so long maintains his power, till the impression of the late proceedings is effaced. Just now he is encamped in Maitsha, south of Lake Tsana ; but I question whether his vast army will not prove dangerous to himself in an impoverished and hostile country. The peasantry are all weary of this unsettled state of the empire, and secretly sigh for a change of government.”

This was written from Southern Abyssinia in 1863. When I was in the northern portion of the empire in the beginning of the present year, I heard everything thus stated fully confirmed, and more than confirmed. Like the children of Israel, the Abyssinians—the *Beni Israel*, as they call themselves—sigh by reason of their bondage under a sovereign whom they do not scruple to style “ Pharaoh, King of Egypt,” and they look anxiously, yet hopefully, for the day when a deliverer shall arise, like Moses, to free them from their oppressor.

Yet Theodore, with all his faults, is but one of a class. Like other “ heroes,”

“ From Macedonia’s madman to the Swede,”

he bears down and crushes all that stands between him and the object of his desires ; and like them he will learn, when it shall be too late, that “ wisdom is better than weapons of war.”

But I have been anticipating the course of events, the narrative of which shall be resumed in the following Chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

THEODORE'S RECEPTION OF CONSUL PLOWDEN—HE OBJECTS TO A CONSULATE—CONSUL PLOWDEN'S REPORT—LORD CLARENDON'S APPROVAL OF PROCEEDINGS—PROPOSED EMBASSY—SUBSEQUENT NEGOCIATIONS—CONSUL PLOWDEN'S CONDUCT CONDEMNED AND VINDICATED—AGAU NEGUSYE'S REBELLION IN TIGRE—HIS RECOGNITION BY FRANCE—CESSION TO FRANCE OF ADULIS AND DISSEE—CAPTAIN DE RUSSEL'S MISSION—CONSUL PLOWDEN AND MR. BELL KILLED—THEODORE'S VENGEANCE—DEFEAT AND EXECUTION OF NEGUSYE—FRENCH ATTEMPTS ON THE COAST OF ABYSSINIA—ZEILA—OBOKH.

At the time of the defeat of Ras Ali in 1853, Mr. Bell was in that prince's camp, and was either taken prisoner by the conqueror or submitted to him. In either case he was pardoned, and soon stood in high favour, even more so than with Ras Ali. Consul Plowden was at the time at Massowah, but on being written to by his friend Bell, he proceeded to Gondar, where, in June 1855, he had an interview with the Emperor. What took place on the occasion is thus graphically described by Mr. Plowden, in a Report to the Earl of Clarendon, dated Gondar, June 25, 1855:—"On approaching the camp, the intervening country being dangerous to traverse on account of the Gallas, I requested an escort; the King, to do me honour, sent four of his generals with several companies of gunners, who accompanied me to the camp with ceremony, the King's flutes and drums playing before me, and fired a salute of musketry when I approached his tent. The tent was filled with all his officers in handsome dresses, and the ground was

entirely covered with carpets ; the King was seated on a couch, splendidly attired, with his crown on the pillow and his sword of state held behind him : the Abuna and the Etjegye were seated on high chairs to the right and left—every one else standing. He received me with great politeness, and caused me to sit down on a carpet near himself. After a short conversation respecting my journey and on the forms of government in England and other countries, he told me to retire, as I must be fatigued, causing a large tent to be pitched for me

“ The evening before the day fixed for my departure, the King sent to me to know the object of my coming. I replied that I had not come on the part of the Government or in any official capacity ; but that as I was about to visit England, it was important that I should know and report His Majesty’s disposition respecting the establishment of a Consulate and friendly relations generally ; I hinted also at what had been arranged with the Ras, Ali. The King said, ‘ I know nothing of what Ras Ali may have done ; I am young and inexperienced in public affairs ; I have never heard of a Consulate under the former Kings of Abyssinia, and this matter must be referred to my Council and the principal people of my court.’

“ The next day, being sick myself, I sent Mr. Bell, who is much trusted by the King ; and after several messages to and fro the King finally replied as follows :—‘ I cannot consent to a Consulate, as I find in the history of our institutions no such thing ; but for anything else that you wish for, now or hereafter, for yourself and other English, I shall be happy to perform your pleasure ; and could I receive any Consul, I should wish for no

one more agreeable to me, or more esteemed by me, than yourself.'

"I had ventured to hint that the sea-coast and Massowah might possibly be given up to him on his consent; but, though his ambition was roused at this, *he feared the clause conferring jurisdiction on the Consul as trenching on his prerogative*; and the time for consideration was so short that, though half inclined to say yes, he was too much startled at my proposals to do so. •

"The next morning he offered me some hundred dollars for the expenses of my journey, and begged me to pass the rainy season in Gondar. I replied that, had he received me as Consul, I should even have followed him in his campaigns and have shared his dangers; but that after his refusal my duty was to return to my country as soon as possible; and that as for the money I could not receive it, as I was paid by my own Sovereign. He spoke to me in the most affectionate manner, gave orders for my honourable reception everywhere as far as Massowah, and said, 'In refusing your request for a Consulate, my only reason is that it appears an innovation, but do you not forget my friendship for you, and cause your Queen also to regard me as a friend. After the rains I shall send to Her Majesty an Embassy and letters, and when these wars are finished I will give every favour and protection to Englishmen who may visit my country: do you also visit me and write to me.'

"The Abuna, Abba Salama, tried in every way to assist me in this negotiation; and it will be seen that the King's refusal is hardly a refusal, and that *he does not wish to break off all treaty with us, but rather the con-*

trary, being only startled by the clause about jurisdiction of Consuls.

“ I left the camp with all honour, the King adjuring me twenty times not to forget to write to him constantly wherever I might be, and giving me his own mule to ride as a proof of his friendly feelings. I told him that I should report all our conversation, and receive the orders of my Government in consequence ; that I should then report the answer to him, which was all that I was authorized to do ”*.

Lord Clarendon’s reply, dated November 27th, 1855, to Consul Plowden’s despatch, was couched in the following terms :—

“ I have read with great interest the able report on the present state of the Kingdom of Abyssinia, inclosed in your despatch dated Gondar, June 25th, 1855, and *I entirely approve your proceedings as reported in that despatch, as well as the language held by you at your interview with the King Theodorus.*

“ You will acquaint the King that Her Majesty’s Government are fully informed with respect to the events that have recently taken place in Abyssinia, and that they desire to express their admiration of the valour and skill which he has displayed in the field and of his moderation in victory, and also of the wisdom and benevolence with which he has commenced the work of reform, and of his labours for the welfare of his people. At the same time, however, you will convey the advice and express the earnest hope of Her Majesty’s Government, that the King will

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, ‘Further Correspondence,’ &c. pp. 44, 45.

abstain from religious persecution and extending religious principles by force of arms, which is contrary to the principles of Christianity, and cannot fail to involve him in endless troubles.

“ Her Majesty’s Government are convinced that the establishment of friendly and intimate relations between Great Britain and Abyssinia would be attended with many advantages to both countries ; and you will accordingly inform the King that *the Queen, our gracious Sovereign, will have much pleasure in receiving, and treating with due honour, the Ambassadors whom His Majesty may send to Her Court.*

“ This must, however, depend upon your receiving from the King a distinct assurance that he renounces all idea of conquest in Egypt and at Massowah.

“ Her Majesty’s Government have latterly remonstrated in the strongest terms against the intentions of the Viceroy of Egypt to attack Abyssinia ; and the present Viceroy has not only put a stop to such proceedings and has confined himself within the limits of his own dominions, but he has set free the Abyssinian prisoners reduced to slavery by his predecessor. Her Majesty’s Government would subject themselves to grave suspicions if they received an Embassy from a sovereign whose designs against the Sultan, the ally of the Queen of England, were previously known to them.

“ Should you receive a complete and satisfactory assurance on this subject, and should the King of Abyssinia determine to send Ambassadors to Her Majesty’s Court, *it will be your duty to accompany them, and you are hereby authorized to defray the expenses of their journey to Eng-*

land, respecting which you will be careful to observe all reasonable economy.

“I apprehend, however, that the route which the Ambassadors would pursue must be through Egypt; and as the Viceroy is aware of the hostile designs of the King, it is highly probable that His Highness will not allow them to pass through his territory; and you will therefore communicate with Mr. Bruce, and ascertain from him whether leave will be granted or not, as it would be highly inexpedient that you should be exposed to being turned back from the Egyptian frontier in company with the Abyssinian emissaries”*.

At what time this despatch of Lord Clarendon reached Consul Plowden, and what negotiations took place between that officer and the Emperor in consequence of it, do not appear. Earl Russell, in his despatch to Colonel Stanton of October 5th, 1865 †, says that the Emperor Theodore, “so far from insisting on the observance of the Treaty of 1849, refused *altogether* to recognize that Treaty. Consul Plowden was told by the British Government in 1857 that the Emperor was bound in good faith to recognize that Treaty, and that if he objected to any of its provisions he should propose modifications. But from the triumph of the Emperor Theodore in 1856 [it should be 1855] to the present day, the Treaty has been a dead letter.”

From these expressions of Earl Russell the legitimate inference would be that between the accession of the Emperor Theodore and Consul Plowden’s untimely death, that monarch had turned a deaf ear to the representations

* Parl. Paper, 1866, ‘Further Correspondence,’ &c., p. 47.

† *Ibid.* p. 62.

made by the latter at the instance of the British Government ; whereas, as far as is shown by the documents hitherto published, it appears that the Emperor did precisely as it is insinuated he ought to have done but did not.

It is necessary to explain, that the treaty entered into with the Emperor and Ras Ali, in 1849, was based on, or more properly speaking copied from, that made with the King of Shoa in 1841, but with some material modifications. The treaty with Shoa consists of sixteen articles, stipulating for friendship between the two countries, for the reception of "any Ambassador or Envoy" whom either of the high contracting parties might see fit to appoint, for the establishment of commercial intercourse, and for the payment of an import duty of 5 per cent. in Shoa, and of no greater duties in England than are levied on British subjects.

The treaty with the Emperor of Abyssinia in 1849 consists of nineteen articles, of which the first sixteen and the last are nearly *verbatim* the same as the sixteen composing the treaty with the King of Shoa;—with the difference, however, that by the second treaty it is stipulated that the high contracting parties shall receive and protect "any Ambassador, Envoy, or Consul," whom they may reciprocally see fit to appoint.

From the reference to this treaty made in Earl Russell's despatch, it might be imagined that while Her Britannic Majesty agreed to "receive and protect any Ambassador, Envoy, or Consul," His Majesty of Abyssinia would "receive an Ambassador" only ; but in the treaty itself the reciprocity is equal and complete. The later treaty contains further the following important addition :—

“ Article XVII.—His Majesty of Abyssinia agrees that in all cases when a British subject shall be accused of any crime committed in any part of His Majesty’s dominions, the accused shall be tried and adjudged by the British Consul, or other officer duly appointed for that purpose by Her Britannic Majesty ; and in all cases when disputes or differences shall arise between British subjects, or between British subjects and the subjects of His Majesty of Abyssinia, or between British subjects and the subjects of any other foreign Power, within the dominions of His Majesty of Abyssinia, *Her Britannic Majesty’s Consul, or other duly appointed officer, shall have power to hear and decide the same, without any interference, molestation, or hindrance on the part of any authority of Abyssinia, either before, during, or after the litigation.*

“ Article XVIII.—If any British subject shall die in the territories of His Majesty of Abyssinia, the British Consul, or in his absence his representative, shall have the right to take charge of the papers and property of the deceased, for the benefit of his lawful heirs and creditors, *without any interference on the part of the Abyssinian authorities.*”

It is to these additions to the treaty of 1841 introduced into that of 1849, and also generally to the establishment of a Consulate—that is to say a “ Levant ” Consulate—within his dominions, that the Emperor Theodore principally, if not entirely, objected: not to the treaty itself. From his own subjects who had visited Egypt and the Holy Land, as well as from travellers of other nations, he had heard of the abnormal privileges enjoyed by European Consuls in those countries, and of the abuses they have often given rise to; and he was determined—and no one can

blame him for it—that within his dominions an *imperium in imperio*, like that within the Turkish dominions, should not exist.

If Earl Russell wrongfully charged the Emperor Theodore with not keeping his engagements, his subordinate, Mr. Layard, in the debate in the House of Commons on June 30th, 1865, even more wrongfully accused Consul Plowden of breach of duty. His words were, “Unfortunately, Mr. Plowden, our Consul at Massowah, instead of attending to the object with which he was placed there, that of encouraging commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Abyssinia, plunged into the local intrigues. He and Mr. Bell sided with King Theodore, and actually commanded his troops. When information reached home that Mr. Plowden was thus mixing himself up with local conflicts, and acting exactly in opposition to the spirit of the policy which he had been placed there to carry out, Her Majesty’s Government at once sent out instructions for him to return to his post at Massowah, and no longer to interfere in those local differences. Unfortunately, before those instructions reached him, Mr. Plowden had been killed by a native Abyssinian chief”*.

This accusation drew forth the following indignant protest on the part of Consul Plowden’s brother :—

“Mr. Plowden was accredited to Abyssinia, and not to Massowah, which is a Turkish port, without trade, with no mercantile interests and no British subjects to protect, and is valuable only as the means of entry into Abyssinia and of communication with Europe, obviously the reasons for its being made the head quarters of the Consulate. The

* ‘Times,’ July 1, 1865

duties of the Consul were to watch and counteract foreign intrigue—*that of France especially*;—to keep peace between Abyssinia and Egypt; to obtain the abolition of slavery, and to establish and promote commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Abyssinia. His duties commenced in 1848 with a mission to Ras Ali, the then ruler, to whom he was charged with presents and with instructions to conclude a treaty. It was in this capacity he returned to Ras Ali, and not, as Mr. Layard says, to remain in his service.

“From that time to the day of his death the greater portion of his life was spent in visits to the interior and to the King’s Court—first to Ras Ali, and afterwards to King Theodore. These visits were made with the sanction and approval of the Foreign Office, with whom he maintained a constant correspondence, and by whose instructions he was throughout guided. His quarterly certificates, forwarded from various places in the interior, declared him to be ‘at his post,’ and ‘in the exercise of his duties,’ always without challenge or reproof from his superiors.

“He left Massowah on his last visit on the 25th of March, 1855, and was killed in March 1860, on his return homewards.

“In this enforced absence of five years (for he expected to be away as many months only) he carried on his usual correspondence with the Foreign Office, and in accordance with his instructions had frequent personal interviews with King Theodore. Neither in this period, nor before, was he found fault with for quitting Massowah, nor was any prohibition to visit the interior issued. It was impossible there could have been; for the duties required of him were

those of an envoy and minister, absolutely necessitating his presence in the interior, and involving personal intercourse with the King ; and I assert that this necessity was known to and recognized by the Foreign Office up to the middle of 1859, and during the tenure of that office by Lords Palmerston and Clarendon, to whom the facts I have stated must doubtless be well known. At all events, the official despatches will prove what I have said ; and I challenge their production, as well as of any orders or instructions which my brother is alleged to have disobeyed”*.

There can be no question as to the facts thus plainly stated, and it is deeply to be regretted that the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should have spoken so entirely at random. But, however Consul Plowden may have been occupied during the last four years of his life, from 1856 to 1859, it is certain that no definite arrangement was come to, either with respect to the treaty or to the sending of an Embassy to England. One reason may be, that Theodore was far too much occupied at home to be able to turn his attention to foreign affairs. He had invaded and conquered the territories of our ally the King of Shoa ; he had also extended his conquests considerably in the south and centre of the empire ; but he had thereby been forced to neglect the northern portions of it, more especially Tigre and the other dominions of his great competitor Ubye, whom he still kept in imprisonment.

The result was that a serious rival rose to power in that province in the person of a relative of Ubye, named Negúsyé—called Agau Negúsyé, from his being a native

* ‘Standard,’ July 10, 1865.

of the adjoining Agau (Agow) country—who raised the standard of “rebellion” in Tigre, of which province he was recognized as the independent sovereign by the French Consul at Massowah, and also by Msgr. de’ Jacobis, who since his banishment had continued to reside at Halai, the frontier town at the eastern edge of the tableland. The Emperor Napoleon likewise entered into friendly relations with Negúsyé, and wrote to Theodore, in reply to his offers of alliance, recognizing his sovereignty west of the Tákkazyé, but desiring him to recognize Negúsyé as King of the country to the east of that river—that is to say, Tigre, the ancient kingdom of the Axumites.

This alliance between the Emperor Napoleon and Negúsyé led to the following remarkable incident.

- In December 1859, Captain de Russel, of the French navy, landed at Zulla (the ancient Adulis), near Massowah, and proceeded into the interior. The professed object of this mission was purely scientific, Captain de Russel being accompanied by no less than fourteen *savans*! At bottom it proved to be a political mission to the “Emperor” Negúsyé. The cause of this “scientific” mission was a letter addressed by Negúsyé to the Emperor Napoleon, offering to cede to him the Bay of Adulis (Annesley Bay) and the Island of Dissee (Valentia Island) at its entrance, in consideration of French troops being sent to aid Negúsyé in acquiring full possession of Tigre. The Paris newspapers said at the time, “la mission a parfaitement réussi,” the French envoy having proceeded *as far as Gondar* (Theodore’s capital!), where he had an interview with the “Emperor” Negúsyé. The fact however is, that the mission was unable to penetrate further

than Halai, at which place Captain de Russel awaited Negúsyé's arrival. But the latter was prevented from joining him by Theodore's troops, who even came as far as Halai, where they made the French envoy and his companions prisoners, allowing them to remain in Msgr. de' Jacobis's house, under the latter's pledge that they should not leave it till the Emperor Theodore's pleasure should be known. Captain de Russel and his party escaped, however, during the night of the 5th of February, 1860, and returned in safety on board their vessel; whilst Msgr. de' Jacobis was imprisoned and fined for having allowed them to escape, and died soon afterwards from the ill-treatment he sustained.

Simultaneously and intimately connected with the occurrences thus related, a disastrous event took place, which was destined to be the precursor of others yet more calamitous.

In the month of February 1860, Consul Plowden, while marching with a small body of his followers, was attacked by a much larger force under a chief named Garred, a cousin of Negúsyé, the French "King of Tigre." Mr. Plowden was wounded, taken prisoner, ransomed by the Emperor*, but in the following month died of his wounds. In October of the same year, Theodore, accompanied by Mr. Bell, advanced against Garred for the purpose of avenging Consul Plowden's death. Garred, with a force of about 2000 men, was encamped in Waldabba, when Theodore's advanced guard, led by

* This act having been reported to the Government in India, a valuable present was sent to the Emperor from Bombay, independently of the rifle and pair of pistols sent as a present from Her Majesty.

Bell, made a furious attack on them. In the conflict, which was brief, Bell slew Garred with his own hand, but was himself immediately killed by Garred's brothers. A considerable number of the latter's troops having fallen, the rest threw down their arms and surrendered at discretion, when Theodore, after putting Garred's brothers to death with his own hand, executed also all who had surrendered. This frightful sacrifice offered up by a *Christian* sovereign to the manes of the two unfortunate British officers may appear incredible, but it is nevertheless a fact*. The particulars of it may best be given in the Emperor's own account of the occurrence to Captain Cameron, as reported by that officer:—"His Majesty gave me a detailed account of his last campaign against Negusi. This he did with much apparent modesty. He dwelt with graphic clearness on the death-scene of his late Grand Chamberlain, the Englishman Bell, in which our countryman singled out the chief, Garratt, to whom Mr. Plowden, owed his death, and killed him on the battle-field; whilst the King similarly dispatched the same rebel's brother. Both the slain were his Majesty's cousins. He spoke of his further revenge for Mr. Plowden's death when he executed 1500 of Garratt's followers on the same day. *He did this, he said, to win the friendship of Her Majesty*" †.

* The following is the account given by Mr. Stern in page 129 of his 'Wanderings among the Falashas:':—"On October 31st, 1860, three thousand rebels, with their leader Gerat, were defeated by the Royal troops near the western bank of the Taccazy, and mercilessly butchered in cold blood: in fact, so inexorable was the King, that even their wives and children—contrary to former custom—were indiscriminately condemned to perpetual slavery."

† Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 50.

From Earl Russell's despatch of February 20th, 1862, given in a subsequent page, it appears that the Emperor also wrote to his Lordship, informing him of "the steps he had taken to *punish* the men who murdered Mr. Plowden and Mr. Bell," and that his Lordship thanked His Majesty for so doing in the name of the Queen*.

Following up his victory over Garred's detachment, Theodore now marched against the main body of Negúsye's army, which he completely routed in January 1861, Negúsye falling into the hands of his merciless conqueror, by whom he was put to death, together with several of his relatives and principal adherents. On the unfortunate Prince himself was inflicted the punishment awarded to a traitor and murderer. His right hand and left foot were struck off, and he was then left, exposed to public gaze, to linger till he died.

Negúsye's defeat and death did not put an end to the attempts to maintain Tigre as an independent State. His successor, Mehret, a chief of Hamasyen, who like Negúsye was supported by the French and Romish party, had however but a short reign. Theodore, ever fruitful in stratagem, enticed him into the power of one of his adherents, by whom, in October 1861, he was put in chains to await the will of the Emperor, who ordered him to be executed.

Before quitting this portion of the subject, it will be well to give here a summary of the subsequent movements of our allies and neighbours, the French, along the Abyssinian coast.

The ill success of the attempt to obtain a cession of

* See page 68.

the Bay of Adulis and the Island of Dissee only stimulated the French Government to make a fresh one of a more systematic and adroit character in another quarter.

In July 1859, M. Henri Lambert, French Consul at Aden, —brother to M. Joseph Lambert, formerly a merchant in Mauritius, and afterwards Minister of the King of Madagascar, by whom he was sent to France on a mission to the Emperor Napoleon,—was accidentally drowned on the Somauli coast, while crossing from Hodeida to Tadjurrah in a native boat belonging to the port of Zeila. The former Governor of that place, Abu Bekr, who was then at Tadjurrah, revenged himself on his rival and successor, Sheikh Shermerki, by accusing him of the murder of M. Lambert. As soon as this became known at Aden, the British Political Resident, Brigadier (now Sir William M.) Coghlan, dispatched his Assistant, Captain Playfair, in H.M.S. 'Furious,' to investigate the matter on the spot; when it was found that M. Lambert's death was purely accidental, and the charge against Shermarki trumped up by Abu Bekr out of sheer malice. The matter afforded, however, a pretext, such as had been long desired, for French interference. Accordingly, the French corvette 'Somme,' Commodore Vicomte de Langle, went to Zeila towards the end of 1860, to investigate the matter; when Shermarki and about a dozen other natives, most wrongfully accused of being M. Lambert's murderers, were made prisoners, and carried to Hodeida, to be judged by the Turkish Governor, within whose jurisdiction Zeila and Tadjurrah lie. The latter refusing to act in the matter, M. de Langle proceeded to Djidda, where he appealed to the Governor-General of Yemen, who likewise declined to

interfere. On this the French Commodore sailed for France with all his prisoners except Shermarki, who had died on board ship in the harbour of Djidda.

Representations were now made to the Porte by the French Ambassador at Constantinople, the result of which was that the Porte made over to France the revenues of the port of Zeila, till the sum of 30,000 dollars, the estimated cost of M. de Langle's mission to investigate the circumstances of M. Lambert's death, should be paid.

Emboldened by success, the Government of France went on yet further, showing but too plainly what were their real designs.

Towards the end of April 1862, the French *aviso* 'Curieux,' after cruising about the Red Sea for several months, went to Suez, where she took on board the native Somaulis and Dankalis, who had been carried to France by Commodore de Langle, the professed object being to convey them back home. But with them went M. Schaefer, first Oriental Interpreter to the Emperor; who, having carefully surveyed all the Dankali coast from Massowah to Zeila, fixed on a site for a settlement at Obokh, near Ras Bir, about midway between the Straits of Babelmandeb and Tadjurrah, and exactly opposite Aden; which place he purchased of the native governors of Tadjurrah and Raheita for the sum of 10,000 dollars, taking formal possession of it in the name of the Emperor Napoleon.

There ought not to be any doubt as to the illegality of this purchase from acknowledged vassals of the Ottoman Porte, paying customs-duties to the Governor of Zeila, who is subject to the Governor of Hodeida. But the French have at all events succeeded in establishing a

holding title; and we shall doubtless see ere-long the use to which this settlement will be put. It is evidently intended for a base of operations against Abyssinia; and to it, as such, the Emperor Theodore's attention was drawn by Consul Cameron, under instructions from Mr. (now Sir Robert G.) Colquhoun, Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General in Egypt*.

The acquisition of Obokh, by the French was first announced by me in the 'Times' of June 16th, 1862. It would be well if a motion were made in Parliament for the Papers relating to this subject as well as to the transfer from Turkey to Egypt of the western coast of the Red Sea, to which allusion is made in a subsequent Chapter†.

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 51. And see page 72, *post*.

† See pages 134, 135.

CHAPTER V.

CONSUL CAMERON—HIS RECEPTION BY THEODORE—EARL RUSSELL'S LETTER—NEGOTIATIONS FOR AN EMBASSY AND TREATY—ABYSSINIAN CONVENT AND CHURCH AT JERUSALEM—THEODORE'S LETTER TO THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND—SAMUEL, THE EMPEROR'S STEWARD—PROPOSAL FOR A MISSION FROM INDIA.

It would occupy far too much time and space, and would besides be to no good purpose, were I to detail the subsequent events of Theodore's reign, consisting as they do of a succession of campaigns into the various provinces of the Empire, the rulers and people of which were only brought into subjection by the presence of his troops, and "revolted," the one after the other, as soon as these troops were withdrawn. I proceed therefore to relate those events in which our countrymen have taken part, and which have unhappily given occasion to the present work.

As soon as the news of Consul Plowden's death reached England, Captain Charles Duncan Cameron, who had served on the staff of Sir W. Fenwick Williams, Her Majesty's Commissioner with the Turkish army in the East, was appointed his successor. Captain Cameron's appointment as "Her Majesty's Consul in Abyssinia" was announced in the 'London Gazette' of June 24th, 1860; but it was only on February 9th, 1862, two years after Consul Plowden's death, that he arrived at Massowah, which island he was ordered to "consider as the headquarters of his Consulate," and whence, following his predecessor's example, he proceeded to the Court of the

Emperor Theodore, to whom he was the bearer of presents from the British Government.

Before visiting the Abyssinian Court, Captain Cameron accompanied the Duke of Saxe Coburg on an excursion into the country of Bogos, on the northern frontier of Abyssinia; so that it was not till July that he reached Gondar.

During the rainy season of 1862 Consul Cameron remained at Gondar, but at its close he was sent for by the Emperor, whom he joined at his camp in Godjam on the 7th of October. He was received with a salute of twelve guns; and 6000 cavalry, infantry, and matchlock-men were marched on to escort him into camp. His reception, Cameron himself says, was the best His Majesty had yet accorded to an envoy; and the same opinion has been expressed by Europeans who were present on the occasion.

At the first interview, which lasted several hours, His Majesty gave a detailed account of his last campaign against Agau Negúsyé, as has been already narrated*; and "he afterwards broke out into invectives against the Turks, said they were encroaching on him on every side, spoke of the seven flags (as he expressed it) that they had planted on the sea-coast, and dwelt much upon alleged advances from the Egyptian quarter. He announced his intention of fighting with them, and sending ambassadors to the European nations to justify his conduct"†.

Two days after this interview Consul Cameron received a message from His Majesty, directing him to put down

* Page 60.

† Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 50.

his business with him on paper. On this, says that officer, in his despatch to Earl Russell of October 31, 1862, "I wrote immediately that I was deputed to present him with certain gifts and a letter of introduction; also to discuss with him regarding the future. That when Mr. Plowden was killed there were two points under discussion, viz., 1st, a Treaty; 2nd, the sending an Embassy to England. I offered to take these up where Mr. Plowden had left them"*.

Next day Captain Cameron was sent for to deliver his presents and the letter from Earl Russell, of which letter the following is a copy:—

* *Foreign Office, February 20, 1862.*

"Sir,—The Queen my Sovereign has been informed by her servants in the East of the exertions which your Highness kindly made to recover the remains of her late Consul, Mr. Plowden, and of your generosity in declining to accept repayment of the sum of money which you paid for that purpose. Her Majesty commands me to assure your Highness that she views your conduct in regard to this affair as a proof of friendship towards herself and the British nation, of which she is duly sensible.

"In order more particularly to manifest Her Majesty's thankfulness for these your Highness's services, and to show her regard and friendship for you personally, Her Majesty requests your acceptance of a rifle and a pair of revolver pistols as a present from herself. Her Majesty has intrusted these articles to Captain Charles Duncan Cameron, *whom she has appointed her Consul in Abyssinia*, as the successor of the late Mr. Plowden, and who has

* 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 50.

lately taken his departure for his post; and I take this opportunity of introducing him to your Highness, and of requesting your protection and favour in his behalf. He is well acquainted with all that concerns the interests of both countries, and will, I am confident, do all in his power to make himself acceptable to your Highness and to promote your welfare.

“ I thank your Highness for the letter which you addressed to me, informing me of the steps which you had taken to punish the men who murdered Mr. Plowden and Mr. Bell; and with my best wishes for your uninterrupted health and happiness, I recommend you to the protection of the Almighty.

“ Your faithful friend,

(Signed) “ RUSSELL.”

“ (L.S. The large signet.) ”

These were scarcely the terms in which to address a potentate whose predecessors on the throne of Ethiopia had been treated as equals and addressed by the name of “ brother ” by the haughty sovereigns of Spain, and with whom her Britannic Majesty’s ancestors, King James the First and King George the Third, had corresponded likewise. However, both the letter and the presents gave Theodore great pleasure, “ especially the inscription on the gun, to the effect that it was given by Her Majesty in return for the King’s kindness to Mr. Plowden.”

Earl Russell’s instructions to Consul Cameron, as far as they have been published*, are somewhat of the vaguest; but they would appear to have been intended to

* Parl. Paper, 1865, ‘ Papers relating to the Imprisonment of British Subjects,’ pp. 1, 2.

leave him to be governed very much by circumstances and his own discretion. It was, however, understood that he was to take the conduct of his predecessor, Consul Plowden, as his guide generally; and it is quite certain that his attention was expressly drawn to the negotiations still pending for a new treaty and for the dispatch of an embassy to England; which, though unavoidably interrupted in consequence of the death of Consul Plowden and Mr. Bell, had not been, and still were not intended to be broken off, either on the part of the Emperor Theodore or on that of the British Government.

In proof of this, we have the statement of Mr. Stern, that the Emperor, on hearing from him in the beginning of 1860 how prisoners of war were treated in other Christian countries, said to him, "You are superior to us in all things; and, if God permit, I shall soon send an embassy to England, to open the eyes of at least a few of my people." And when Mr. Stern, on his departure for England, took leave of Mr. Bell, the latter told him that "their next meeting would be either in Tigre or in London, to which latter place he was expecting to accompany an Abyssinian embassy."

And, as regards the Foreign Office, it is a fact that after Captain Cameron had been appointed Consul Plowden's successor, but before he arrived in England from the post he held in the Black Sea, Mr. Stern was requested by Earl Russell to remain in London, in order that he might see Captain Cameron and discuss with him the subject of the contemplated embassy and other matters, which had remained in suspense since Consul Plowden's decease.

Yet, notwithstanding that Consul Cameron had full authority to take up the two matters where his predecessor had left them, Mr. Layard, in his place in Parliament on October 31, 1865, when quoting the foregoing extract from Consul Cameron's despatch of October 31, 1862*, ventured to say:—"Now this was altogether contrary to the instructions he had received. So far was Consul Cameron from being instructed to propose an embassy to England from the King, that he was distinctly told that Her Majesty's Government would not entertain the idea of a mission unless he gave up all idea of conquering the Turks and invading Turkish territory; so that Consul Cameron was not justified in making such a proposal to the King. It appears that the King, thinking that Consul Cameron might induce Her Majesty's Government to assist him in exterminating the Mohammedans, wrote the letter to Her Majesty which has been quoted by the honourable Gentleman [Sir Hugh Cairns]. *I have reason to think that this letter was entirely got up by Consul Cameron, who wished to come to this country with the embassy. I am quite under that impression*" †.

But what is the fact? It was not Consul Cameron at all who proposed the embassy. He expressly says that in the first instance he "received a peremptory message from His Majesty to leave for the sea at once, and send him an answer whether the British Government would receive an embassy or not."

On the receipt of this message, Consul Cameron's judicious reflections were these:—"I considered, on the other hand, that as I had been sent to His Majesty at a con-

* See page 67.

† 'Times,' July 1, 1865.

siderable expense and on a mission of pure courtesy, it was his duty at least to give me some reply to the question of a treaty, which had been so long pending, including the other important point as to his admitting a representative of Great Britain to reside in his country, if such were our wish.

“I thought, too, that unless I had clear details with regard to his projected embassy, much embarrassment might ensue to us hereafter; while at the same time I wished to know His Majesty’s intentions regarding the Slave Trade, and to elicit information from him regarding an intercourse with his new kingdom of Shoa, and his hold on the tribes to the side of Zeyla.

“I therefore wrote His Majesty a letter, a copy of which is herewith inclosed.”

This letter from Consul Cameron to the Emperor is given in the Appendix, and it fully confirms the statement made in Earl Russell’s letter to the Emperor, by which Consul Cameron was introduced and accredited to him as Her Britannic Majesty’s “Consul in Abyssinia, as the successor of the late Mr. Plowden,” that—“He is well acquainted with all that concerns the interests of both countries, and will, I am confident, do all in his power to make himself acceptable to your Highness, and to promote your welfare.”

In his despatch to Earl Russell, Consul Cameron goes on to say:—“Fortunately, just as it [the letter to the Emperor] was finished, I got a batch of letters from Massowah. One was a letter from Mr. Colquhoun, telling me that he had received my despatch to your Lordship stating my fears that Turkey intended to encroach on

Abyssinia from her new settlements on the coast; to which he replied that the Porte would be warned to do nothing which could give umbrage to King Theodore. He added that I ought to inform His Majesty that his best mode of obtaining the sympathies of England was by putting down the Slave Trade in his dominions.

“There was a further passage regarding Mr. Schaefer’s mission to Tadjurrah, which was corroborated by an extract from the ‘Home and Overland Mail,’ forwarded from Aden, stating what the mission had done, and that the new settlement* was merely intended for a base of operations against Abyssinia.

“All this, together with the old traité made with Ras Ali, was carefully read through to His Majesty by two interpreters well conversant with English.

“I also forwarded His Majesty a letter, in Arabic, from Jerusalem, detailing the part our Consul had taken in some outrage against the Abyssinian community there.

“The King, at the same time, got information that Russia had 40,000 men within four days of Constantinople; that Sayid Pasha had gone to France; and that the Sultan was in Egypt.

“This various intelligence seems to have pressed heavily on His Majesty. He sent a message thanking me, entreating me to observe the peril in which he was from two powerful enemies, and begging me to act sincerely by him.

“On the following morning I sent a note to His Majesty, telling him that, if he wished, I would return by Matamma, where he told me the Turks had been

* Namely, at Obokh. See pages 63, 64. •

taking tribute unjustly and gathering troops, and do what I could there to keep them back, or, at least, collect facts which might tell against them hereafter. Matamma is, just now, a hot-bed of fever.

"I reassured him about his embassy ; and wishing to mention something more about his statement regarding not provoking attack, which, as your Lordship will perceive, I had written to him to say that I would report, I sent him a letter which I have expedited to our Consul at Khartoum asking the latter to do his utmost to preserve peace, but, above all, to report military movements or aggression on Abyssinia to Alexandria.

"I told His Majesty that I did this for his sake ; he must also now keep his own governors in restraint.

"The answer of His Majesty was kind in the extreme."

For the proper understanding of what is here stated, it should be explained that the "two powerful enemies" were,—first, the French, the allies of Negúsyé, to whose acquisition of Obokh, the Consul-General in Egypt had drawn Consul Cameron's attention ; and secondly, the Egyptians, who were daily making encroachments along the northern frontiers of the empire.

The part our Consul at Jerusalem had "taken in some outrage against the Abyssinian community there" requires a more lengthened explanation and reference.

It is a well-known fact that friendly feelings towards England have been kept up in Abyssinia by gratitude for the good offices rendered to the community of that nation at Jerusalem, a spot regarded by them with the deepest veneration. The Holy City is to the Abyssinians a sort of heaven upon earth, to which they have eagerly made

pilgrimages from the olden time. To have been to Jerusalem imparts to the traveller, in their estimation, a sanctity far greater than the pilgrimage to Mecca gives to the Mohammedan *hadji*.

It was this that disposed the Abyssinians to receive Bishop Gobat when he first went to Abyssinia as a missionary, he having prepared himself by a short stay in Jerusalem, where he made himself known to the Abyssinian residents. When he was made Bishop of Jerusalem in 1846, the Abyssinians rejoiced at his appointment, and the community of that nation in Jerusalem were placed under his spiritual rule by the princes of that country.

In July 1852, Bishop Gobat, who was then in London, appealed to Her Majesty's Government on behalf of Ras Ali and Dedjatj Ubye, who had adopted at a meeting at Gondar a resolution to the effect that Her Majesty should be requested to authorize the bishop to protect and superintend their countrymen visiting or residing in Jerusalem, and to authorize the British Consul at Jerusalem to lend him his assistance for that purpose when required.

Lord Malmesbury's answer to this request was, that "Her Majesty's Government could not undertake to protect officially the natives of Abyssinia who might chance to be residing in the territory of the Sublime Porte. But Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem would be instructed *to use his good offices for them*, in case of need, as members of a Christian Church in spiritual communion with the Established Church in this country."

Under these "proper and judicious" instructions, as they are styled by Earl Russell, no difficulty occurred during the ten years of the British "official" protec-

torate of the Abyssinians in Jerusalem—that is to say, from 1852 to 1862.

The Abyssinian pilgrims, finding there was safety from personal violence, came to Jerusalem in largely increased numbers, and the settlers in the convent of that nation amounted to more than a hundred.

This prosperity of the Abyssinians raised the jealousy of the Copts and Armenians in Jerusalem. During the Egyptian rule in Palestine, those two communities had joined together in despoiling the Abyssinians of much of their property in Jerusalem. It happened that the Abyssinian monks had all died of the plague, and the Armenians and Copts got possession of their title-deeds and destroyed them, under pretence of infection. The Armenian convent, however, supplied the Abyssinian pilgrims with a daily provision of soup and bread, as a kind of compensation.

From the year 1855 those two communities began again to molest the Abyssinians in various ways, and even threatened to take away their only remaining property, consisting of their convent and church. But, finding that the British Consul was informed of all that passed, no violence was attempted by them.

In 1856 the Egyptian Government sent a political mission to Abyssinia, and deputed the Coptic Patriarch, in his capacity of chief of the Coptic and Abyssinian Churches, to be the envoy. The Emperor Theodore resented this interference, and seized the Patriarch's money (all in French gold) and baggage, barely permitting him to return to Egypt. On his arrival there the Patriarch took his revenge, by selling to the Armenians, as Russian subjects, for 60,000 dollars, the Abyssinian church and convent in

Jerusalem. The Abyssinians in that city naturally refused to recognize the sale; and so long as the English Consul was there to prevent violent hands being laid on them, they could not be turned out. Under these circumstances, the Russians did not openly insist on their purchase.

In 1862 a fresh attack was made. The Copts and Armenians had now enlisted on their side the Turkish Pasha of Jerusalem, who marched a body of Turkish soldiers into the Abyssinian convent, but withdrew them on the appearance of the British Consul, whom the affrighted Abyssinians had summoned to the spot. *Sureya Pasha now asserted the sovereignty of Turkey over the Abyssinians as a nation, denying the right of English officials to notice what might befall Turkish subjects, and declaring that Turkey would never abandon her claim to Abyssinia.* On this the British Consul, Mr. Finn, anxious to avoid a collision with the Turkish Pasha, wrote to the Foreign Office for instructions, and in reply was referred by Earl Russell to those given him in 1852.

The Abyssinians, on their part, wrote to their own Sovereign, praying him to send an embassy to England, with a view to obtain effectual protection for their property and lives. This letter was dispatched from Jerusalem in 1862, and is evidently the "letter in Arabic," which is alluded to in Consul Cameron's despatch.

On the day after these matters had been discussed between the Emperor and Consul Cameron, another interview took place, the result of which was that the former "said voluntarily that he had well considered the subject of a Treaty, about which there would be no difficulty, but that at present his mind was full of other things; also,

that if matters went well, he would gladly receive a Consul. He likewise spoke about putting down the Slave Trade, on which I purposely questioned him.

“After this” (Consul Cameron goes on to say) “I presented His Royal Highness the Duke of Saxe-Coburg’s decoration, which was exceedingly well received.

“He then wrote the letter to Her Majesty, which I herewith have the honour to forward.

“The translation was written by his own interpreters.

“He intended also to have written a letter to Mr. Colquhoun about the Slave Trade. and a letter of appeal to the King of Holland, similar to those he had already dictated, but it was too late.

“This morning I was told to leave for Massowah.

“I sent a memorandum to His Majesty, reminding him of the letter for Mr. Colquhoun, and stated the advantage he would derive from it.

“He replied that he would write afterwards, but assured me that he would stop the Slave Trade effectually, not as a concession to us, but because he hated it himself.

“He repeated his expressions of entire confidence in me, and added that he believed I would be a friend to him, as Mr. Plowden had been before.

“A royal circular of appeal has likewise been forwarded to France from the camp this day by a Frenchman, whom the King has given 500 dollars for his road expenses.

“It states, like the two others, that His Majesty projects a struggle with the Turks, and wishes to send ambassadors to France. He requests an answer by the bearer, who is, however, travelling slowly.

“One will also go for Russia, with which country His

Majesty has been in some communication. Others are being prepared for the German Powers.

“As it is desirable on every account that we should not be without a correspondence in Abyssinia for a considerable time, I am preparing a letter on the subject to the Resident at Aden, a copy of which will herewith be inclosed.”

The Emperor's letter to Her Majesty was as follows:—

“In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one God in Trinity.

“[The] chosen by God, King of Kings, Theódoros of Ethiopia, to Her Majesty Victoria, Queen of England.

“I hope your Majesty is in good health. By the power of God I am well.

“My fathers the Emperors having forgotten our Creator, he handed over their kingdom to the Gallas and Turks*. But God created me, lifted me out of the dust, and restored this empire to my rule. He endowed me with power, and enabled me to stand in the place of my fathers. By His power I drove away the Gallas. But for the Turks I have told them to leave the land of my ancestors. They refuse. I am now going to wrestle with them.

“Mr. Plowden, and my late Grand Chamberlain, the Englishman Bell, used to tell me that there is a great Christian Queen, who loves all Christians. When they said to me this, ‘We are able to make you known to her, and to establish friendship between you,’ then in

* The Abyssinians use the word “Turk” to mean Mohammedans in general, without regard to nationality. In most cases, when the Turks are spoken of, the Turco-Egyptians are intended.

those times I was very glad. I gave them my love, thinking that I had found your Majesty's goodwill. All men are subject to death; and my enemies, thinking to injure me, killed these my friends. But by the power of God I have exterminated those enemies, not leaving one alive, though they were of my own family, that I may get, by the power of God, your friendship.

"I was prevented by the Turks occupying the sea-coast from sending you an Embassy when I was in difficulty. Consul Cameron arrived with a letter and presents of friendship. By the power of God I was very glad hearing of your welfare, and being assured of your amity. I have received your presents, and thank you much.

"I fear that if I send Ambassadors with presents of amity by Consul Cameron, they may be arrested by the Turks.

"And now I wish that you may arrange for the safe passage of my Ambassadors everywhere on the road.

"I wish to have an answer to this letter by Consul Cameron, and that he may conduct my Embassy to England.

"See how the Islam oppress the Christian" *.

Consul Cameron's letter to the Resident at Aden has not been given in the Papers laid before Parliament. It was written at the instigation of Samuel Georgis, who had been (so to say) a party to Major Harris's mission to the King of Shoa in 1841 †, and it was to the effect that the

* This refers to the Moslem oppression of the Christians at *Jerusalem*. "Islam" is the Abyssinian form of "Moslems."

† As it will be interesting to know who "Samuel, the Emperor's Steward," is, I give here an extract from a 'Memoir on the Europeans who have visited the Kingdom of Shoa during the present Century,' dated 7th September, 1841, being one of four Memoirs which I

Indian Government should forthwith dispatch a similar mission to the Emperor Theodore.

After receiving the letter for the Queen, Captain Cameron lost no time in taking his departure for the coast. He was accompanied by the following five persons:—Samuel, the Emperor's steward; Mertcha, a son of Aito Warkye, an Armenian, who settled in Abyssinia many years ago, and was known to me in Shoa—Mertcha

drew up for Major Harris whilst in Shoa, as is recorded in my 'Statement of Facts,' relative to the transactions between that officer and myself, published in the year 1845 (2nd edit. 1846):—

"Samuel Georgis, or Hussein, is the son of a Mohammedan Dankáli chief of Northern Abyssinia, who stood high in the favour of Sabagádis, the late ruler of Tigre, and who was well known to the Rev. Mr. Gobat, a British missionary in that part of the country. His father having been murdered shortly after the untimely death of his chief, Samuel Georgis was charitably taken charge of by Mr. Gobat; and on that gentleman's quitting Tigre, was left with his successor, Mr. Isenberg. Mr. Krapf, who joined Mr. Isenberg in the beginning of 1838, thus became acquainted with Samuel Georgis, of whom he entertained no very good opinion; and when shortly afterwards (in the month of March of the same year) the mission was expelled from Tigre by Ubye, he strongly dissuaded Mr. Isenberg from taking the lad with them. Mr. Isenberg however prevailed, and Samuel Georgis accompanied them to Cairo, where he was baptized. But having disagreed with his preceptors, and M. Kielmaier having returned to Egypt from Tigre, preparatory to setting out for Shoa, Hussein volunteered to accompany him, and came into Shoa after M. Kielmaier's death, arriving here in the beginning of 1840.

"Samuel Georgis being rather an intelligent young man and of prepossessing manners, the Negús took a great fancy to him; and as it happened that, just at the moment, he, at the suggestion of Mr. Krapf, proposed writing to Captain Haines, Samuel Georgis was commissioned by him to be the bearer of his letter, with the presents that accompanied it. Towards the end of July he left Shoa for Aden, which place he reached not long before my arrival there. Mr. Krapf had suggested to Captain Haines that Samuel Georgis should return to Egypt for the purpose of finishing his education; but, as I was in want of a servant and interpreter on my journey hither, Captain

himself having been educated in Bombay, and being one of the two persons who had interpreted into English the Emperor's letter to the Queen; two other natives named Engada-Wark and Kassa Debotj, who were deputed to carry the Emperor's letters to Aden; and, lastly, M. Bardel, the Frenchman referred to in Consul Cameron's despatch as being the bearer of the "Royal circular of appeal" to the Emperor of the French.

On his way to the coast, Captain Cameron was stopped

Haines kindly engaged him to accompany me. At first I had every reason to be satisfied with his services; but when on the road he accidentally discovered that he was nearly related to Loaita, the powerful chief of the Débeni Danákil, he began to give himself airs; and when subsequently, as we approached this country, we saw letters from Walasma Mohammed to the principal chiefs of the Débeni and Wééma tribes, desiring them to 'take good care of all travellers coming to Ifat, and especially of Hadji Dufey, Rochet, and *Hussein*,' his head was quite turned, and he fancied himself to be a much greater man than his master. And I believe he really was in the eyes of the Negús and his people; and it was to prevent a recurrence of similar conduct in the event of his accompanying the embassy—in whose case it would have been of far more consequence than it was in that of a mere private individual—that Captain Haines detained him on his return to Aden, and would not allow him to come again to Shoa until after the embassy had been received. Had he accompanied it, he would have assumed to himself the merit of having brought it.

"Samuel Georgis returned to Aden on the 3rd of March [1841], bearing a letter to Captain Haines, with a few additional presents of no great value."

To these remarks it has to be added that in the King of Shoa's letter to the Queen of England, dated October 2nd, 1841 (Parl. Paper (54), 1844, 'Shoa, Extracts of Correspondence,' &c.), it is said, "By my messenger, Samuel Georgis, I formerly despatched some tokens of esteem, together with a letter, wherein I sought your friendship."

I had not heard anything of Samuel Georgis, except that he had settled at Aden, till, on my arrival in Abyssinia this year, I was enabled to identify him as "Samuel, the Emperor's Steward."

in Tigre by a "rebel" chief at the head of 300 men, and compelled to take refuge in the sanctuary of Axum, which prevented him from going down to Massowah and caused some delay on his part; and on the arrival of his despatches at that port, they had to be sent to Europe by the circuitous route of Aden; so that they did not reach London till the 12th of February, 1863. M. Bardel was more fortunate. Whether in accordance with a previous arrangement or merely by a lucky coincidence, the French vessel of war 'Curieux' took M. Bardel on board at Massowah, and conveyed him with his despatches to Djiddah and Suez; so that, although Consul Cameron reported home that he was "travelling slowly," he arrived with them in Paris most probably before the English despatches reached Aden.

These latter despatches were carried down to Massowah and thence to Aden by the two native messengers—Mertcha, who accompanied them as far as Massowah, remaining at the British Consulate there to bring up the answers when they should arrive. Consul Cameron himself, accompanied by Samuel, proceeded to Bogos, in accordance with the desire of the Emperor, and as announced in the Consul's despatches to Earl Russell and to Mr. Colquhoun.

CHAPTER VI.

CONSUL CAMERON'S JOURNEY TO BOGOS—BLAMED BY EARL RUSSELL—CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE BOARD OF TRADE RESPECTING THE COMMERCE OF ABYSSINIA—CONSUL CAMERON ORDERED TO REPORT THEREON—HIS JOURNEY TO MATAMMA—M. LEJEAN'S ARRIVAL IN ABYSSINIA—HIS IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE—CONSUL CAMERON'S RETURN—INTERVIEW WITH THE EMPEROR—HIS DISGRACE AND DETENTION—CAUSES OF THE EMPEROR'S DISPLEASURE—M. BARDEL'S RETURN FROM FRANCE—EMPEROR NAPOLEON'S LETTER—ITS TREATMENT—CONSUL LEJEAN EXPELLED—CONSUL CAMERON'S DESPATCHES STOPPED—HIS MESSENGER BEATEN—EARL RUSSELL'S DESPATCH OF APRIL 22ND, 1863—THEODORE'S LETTER TO THE QUEEN IGNORED. •

I HAVE NOW to narrate the incidents of Consul Cameron's journey to Bogos and the neighbouring frontier districts, with the highly important consequences of that journey.

The recent disturbances in Tigre having raised many robber-bands, Consul Cameron applied to the authorities, who furnished him with an escort of 5000 men across the river Mareb into Hamasyen. The strength of this escort (he explains) was regulated by their own fears, as the Emperor had written to say that if anything happened to Cameron he would reduce Tigre to a desert.

The details of our Consul's proceedings are given in his despatch to Earl Russell, dated "Bogos, Abyssinia, March 31, 1863," in which he says that a statement of the facts was being carried to King Theodore by his representative there, who persisted, with his master, in viewing the Turkish claim to the Bogos, Halhal, and Habab as illusory,—this representative being Samuel, who had accom-

panied him as far as Bogos, and thence returned to his master. Consul Cameron had also himself written twice to the Emperor explaining matters ; and he adds, " What effect the news from here may have on a character at once so passionate and politic, it is impossible for me to say. He may either allow his grievances to accumulate, in order to lay them before Europe hereafter, or he may at once take violent measures to compel the Turks to a certain amount of decency in their transactions on his frontier. He will, however, do nothing without seeing his way."

Among the Papers, for the production of which Lord Chelmsford, in the House of Lords, moved an address to Her Majesty on May 23rd, 1865, was a " Copy of Report made by Captain Cameron from Bogos in or about March 1863, and of the orders in consequence of such Report sent to him by the Consul-General in Egypt, or from the Foreign Office." To this part of the address no return was made under Earl Russell's Administration. The Report itself was, however, produced by Lord Stanley at the close of the last Session—though seemingly not in a perfect form, as Mr. Murray's letter, dated August 13th, 1863*, acknowledging its receipt, relates to matters which are not mentioned in the copy laid before Parliament.

From Bogos Consul Cameron proceeded to Kassala, and thence to Kedarif, whence he addressed Earl Russell on May 20th, 1863, with a copy of his despatch to Consul-General Colquhoun at Alexandria of the same date, and several enclosures, bearing on the aggressions of the Egyptians on the Abyssinian frontier districts. In all

* Parl. Paper, 1865, 'Papers relating to the Imprisonment,' &c., p. 3.

these communications both to Earl Russell and to Mr. Colquhoun, Captain Cameron, taking as his guide the conduct of his predecessor Consul Plowden, appears to have acted as the advocate and protector of the Christian Abyssinians and in the interests of their sovereign the Emperor Theodore—what he did being with the full concurrence of that Sovereign, and indeed in concert with Samuel, the Emperor's favourite and representative. It is therefore clear that there could have been no foundation for Earl Russell's ill-advised allegation in his despatch to Colonel Stanton, that "the chief cause of the Emperor's anger with Consul Cameron was this journey to Bogos."

His proceedings, however, incurred the displeasure of the British authorities both at home and in Egypt; and the Government of that country did not scruple to charge the British Consul with having invaded the Egyptian territory at the head of an Abyssinian army. The subject formed at the time a topic of conversation among the European residents in Egypt; and I was assured by one of the best-informed of them, that, had the Viceroy, Ismail Pasha, insisted on it, our Consul would have been recalled.

No doubt Egypt in 1863, under the able and energetic rule of Ismail Pasha, and with a crop of one hundred and fifty millions of pounds of cotton, was very different from Egypt in 1854 under Abbas Pasha, when the country was on the verge of ruin. Otherwise it does not seem that the conduct of Consul Cameron differs materially from that of Consul Plowden, for which, at the time, the latter obtained much credit.

In his despatch to Consul-General Colquhoun from

Kedarif, dated May 20th, 1863, Consul Cameron says, with reference to his despatches of October 31st, 1862, from the Emperor's camp:—"It will give you an idea of the slowness with which my Government correspondence is carried on, when I state that I do not yet know whether those letters have reached England or not; yet I have received a packet from Massowah to-day." On this, it may be remarked that, as those despatches did not reach London till February 12th, 1863, and were not even acknowledged (not to speak of their being replied to) by Earl Russell till April 22nd of the same year, some time had still to elapse before any answer could possibly be received.

But in the packet which Consul Cameron received at Kedarif, there was (unless it had previously reached him) one despatch, with enclosures, from the Foreign Office, which requires particular notice. In order to understand the nature of that despatch and its contents, it is necessary to relate rather a long story, going back several years.

In the beginning of the year 1849, an application having been made to me from the Board of Trade for information respecting the commerce of Abyssinia, I had an interview with Sir Denis Le Marchant, then Secretary to the Board; and, in consequence of what took place on the occasion, I, at his instance, addressed to him a letter for the consideration of the President of the Board, Mr. Labouchere (now Lord Taunton), in which I suggested the establishment of a British factory on the edge of the high tableland of Abyssinia, behind Massowah. Sir Denis Le Marchant's reply, whilst according to my sug-

gestion some degree of favour, stated that Mr. Labouchere thought it desirable to see the Reports of Her Majesty's Consul in Abyssinia before forming a decided opinion on the subject*. Those Reports were laid before Parliament at the close of the Session of 1866 †, more than seventeen years after the President of the Board of Trade had expressed his intention to be guided by them when received.

Unconscious of the existence of such Reports, as I believe the officials of the Board of Trade likewise to have been, I addressed Sir James Emerson Tennent, the present Secretary to the Board, on November 3rd, 1862, calling attention to my letter of March 5th, 1849, and

* The following is the reply of the Secretary of the Board of Trade :—

“ Board of Trade, March 16, 1849.

“ SIR,—I am directed by the President of this Board to thank you for your letter of the 6th, which, as well as your letters to the Foreign Office, he has read with great interest.

“ That the establishment of a Factory, as you suggest, on the eastern edge of the tableland immediately above Massówah, might eventually be attended with advantageous results to British commerce, the facts adduced in your letter certainly go far to prove. On the other hand, the extreme insecurity of such an establishment, owing to the conflicting and fluctuating fortunes of the native chiefs in that part of Africa, renders the measure one of very doubtful policy; and Mr. Labouchere thinks it desirable to see the Reports that may, from time to time, be expected from H. M. Consul in Abyssinia, before he forms a decided opinion on the subject.

“ In the meanwhile, he wishes you to be assured of his sense of the readiness with which you have given him the benefit of your researches in a country respecting which it is very difficult to obtain authentic information.

“ I have the honour to be, &c.,

“ *Charles T. Beke, Esq.*”

“ DENIS LE MARCHANT.”

† Parliamentary Paper, 1866, ‘ Further Correspondence,’ &c. p. 5 *et seq.*

also to two other communications I had made to the Board—the one “On the Trade of Intertropical Africa,” addressed to Mr. Labouchere, President, on January 27th, 1852, and the other “On the Cultivation of Cotton in Taka and Northern Abyssinia,” addressed to Lord Colchester, Vice-President, on March 31st, 1852. And with reference to the contents of the latter of these two communications, I remarked that the precarious condition of affairs in North America rendered what was there said respecting Ethiopian cotton far more pertinent, and therefore more cogent, at that time (1862) than it had been when written upwards of ten years previously.

On November 27th and December 26th of the same year I again addressed the Secretary of the Board of Trade on matters connected with the same subject.

On January 10th, 1863, the Secretary of the Board of Trade wrote to me in these terms:—“With reference to your letters of November 3rd and 27th, and 26th ultimo, respecting the expediency of adopting measures for the development of British commerce in Abyssinia, I am directed to inform you that your communications have been referred by Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for the report of Her Majesty’s Consul at Mas-sowah.” No allusion whatever was made to the previous reports of the late Consul Plowden, the existence of which, carefully put away in some pigeon-hole in Whitehall Gardens, I can only conclude to have been then as forgotten at the Foreign Office as it was unknown at the Board of Trade.

The reference to Consul Cameron was made, as is evident, at some time between December 26th, 1862, and

January 10th, 1863; and the despatch from the Foreign Office, together with some of my original communications, which had been transmitted in it, reached him from Massowah apparently on May 20th of the latter year, whilst he was at Kedarif; and on the 25th of the same month, he accordingly wrote from that place that he was going to Matamma, "to see about cotton, and trade, and so forth." That he undertook the journey is, unfortunately as it has turned out, but too true; but whether he ever made any report on the subject, I cannot say: at all events, no such report had reached the Board of Trade as lately as July 12th, 1866, as I learned on applying officially for information on the subject.

Whilst Consul Cameron was thus absent in the north of Abyssinia, M. Lejean, who in 1860-61 had been charged with a mission from the French Government into the regions of the Upper Nile, in the course of which he had visited Abyssinia, and who had made an able report on the subject of his mission, now returned to that country with the appointment of Consul at Massowah, and charged with a special mission from the Emperor Napoleon to the Emperor Theodore, the professed object of which was the opening of a trade between France and Abyssinia. At his audience with the Abyssinian Monarch; M. Lejean presented a letter, which at the time was said to be an autograph of the Emperor Napoleon, but which was in fact signed by M. Thouvenel, then Minister for Foreign Affairs; in which letter it is naively declared that the Emperor would never have countenanced the pretensions of Agau Negúsyé in 1859*, had he been at all aware of

* See page 58.

his being a rebel. In token of his esteem, the Emperor sent by M. Lejean several valuable presents, and also offered to his Abyssinian Majesty the gratuitous services of M. Legard, an able French physician, who had accompanied M. Lejean into Abyssinia.

As the result of this audience, M. Lejean reported his expectation that French produce would be admitted into Abyssinia on payment of a moderate import duty, and that Theodore was disposed to send an ambassador to France; which latter fact had, however, been already directly communicated to the Emperor Napoleon through M. Bardel.

When M. Lejean arrived at Court, he found the Abyssinian Monarch on the point of setting out on another campaign into the "revolted" province of Godjam, where Tádela Gwalu was again in arms, having fortified himself in the impregnable *amba* or hill-fort of Djibella, near the great market of Baso, in the south of the peninsula; and at the invitation or in compliance with the commands of his Abyssinian Majesty, the Consul of France accompanied the army, crossing, on the 11th of February 1863, the bridge over the Abai into the peninsula of Godjam. He has given a very interesting description of the march westwards, till he arrived within five hours of the source of the Abai, which, however, he was unable to visit*.

In his account of the occurrences which have next to be related, M. Lejean says:—"I now enter upon a series of events which are the more delicate to narrate because I

* My own two visits to this Source of the Nile are related in the 'Journal of the Royal Geographical Society,' vol. xiv. pp. 12-14, 33-37.

had to perform a part in them that was not always voluntary. The reader will understand without difficulty the repugnance I entertain to dwell on these recollections, and the *convenances* which oblige me to allude to rather than to explain them." It is only to be regretted that this sense of propriety, most suitable in a person occupying M. Lejean's official position, should not have induced him to refrain altogether from adverting to the circumstances in question, unless he felt himself at liberty to represent them in their true colours.

On the 1st of March, a plot against the life of the Emperor was discovered, and the conspirators were summarily punished—eighteen of them, in the Monarch's presence, having the right hand and the left foot cut off (the ordinary punishment for high treason), and being left to a lingering death or to be devoured by the hyænas.

On the following morning (March 2nd) M. Lejean says that, "on some absurd suspicions which he could never unravel, he was arrested by order of the Emperor and put in irons, as was also the Naib of Arkiko." According to other information, M. Lejean had provoked the Emperor by protesting against one of his judicial acts. The version given to myself, in a letter written from Gondar shortly after the event occurred, is, that, "weary with Abyssinian life and the still greater hardships of the campaign into the distant province of Godjam, he suddenly resolved on demanding his *congé*. The Emperor, not being in a very placid humour, refused to receive his guest; and the latter, with equal pertinacity, insisted on having an audience. This exasperated the monarch, and poor Lejean was put in chains, and for four-and-twenty hours had to meditate on

this novel mode of enforcing court etiquette." The following day he was liberated on parole, Debra Tabor being assigned to him as a residence, with liberty to move about at his free will within a distance of 30 or 40 leagues. Towards the end of April, however, he was at Gondar, at liberty, but always on parole.

The Godjam campaign proved a failure, although in the French newspapers Theodore was reported to have been victorious. The Emperor returned home, after having caused his troops to devastate the districts within their reach, and to commit every sort of atrocity.

In the month of June 1863 Captain Cameron found his way back to Gondar from his lengthened excursion in the north. His position was a most pitiable one. He had brought with him no answer from the Queen of England to the Emperor's letter of October 31st, 1862; but, from the greater proximity of India and apparently a greater alacrity there than at home in answering letters, he had already received a decided negative to the proposal made for a mission to be sent from Bombay. He had further been reprimanded by the Consul-General in Egypt (within whose jurisdiction the Consulate in Abyssinia had then recently been placed—apparently as a proof, like the withdrawal of British protection from the Abyssinians at Jerusalem, that in future this Christian country was to be regarded as a dependency of Turkey, and its inhabitants as vassals of the Porte) for having taken on himself to submit such a proposal to the Indian Government direct, instead of sending it through his superior officer. His political proceedings in the Abyssinian province of Bogos—not his commercial visit to the Egyptian districts

further to the west, which he had been ordered to make—had likewise been reproved by the Consul-General, and this long before the displeasure of Earl Russell himself could be manifested to him. It would however seem that he had already received some communication from the Foreign Office, desiring him not to meddle in the affairs of Abyssinia, but to return forthwith to Massowah*.

In the following month, July, the Emperor himself came to Gondar; and it was under the untoward circumstances which have just been described that the British Consul met the Emperor of Abyssinia face to face. At his first audience that monarch put to him a series of point-blank questions, to which he was required to give straightforward and unequivocal answers. They were to this effect:—"Where have you been since you parted from Samuel in Bogos?" "Into the frontier provinces of Soudan."—"What for?" "To see about cotton, and trade, and so forth."—"Who told you to go there?" "The British Government."—"Have you brought me an answer from the Queen of England?" "No."—"Why not?" "Because I have not received any communication from the Government on the subject."—"Why, then, do you come to me now?" "To request permission to return to Massowah."—"What for?" "Because I have been ordered by the Government to go there."—"So," exclaimed the exasperated monarch, "your Queen can give you orders to go and visit my enemies the Turks, and then to return to Mas-

* If I mistake not, Earl Russell wrote to Consul Cameron as early as June or July 1862, ordering him to leave Theodore alone.

sowah ; but she cannot send a civil answer to my letter to her. You shall not leave me till that answer comes."

That Consul Cameron's visit to the Egyptian cotton-growing districts, by order of Her Majesty's Government, was one of the main causes of the Emperor's displeasure, is confirmed by the testimony of two persons who were in Abyssinia at the time. Mr. Stern says, "During his [the Emperor's] stay in our vicinity I heard several times that he was annoyed that Captain Cameron had not brought an answer to his letter to the British Government, and also for having gone round the frontier, and formed (as was falsely stated) prejudicial intimacies with his enemies the Turks."

M. Lejean's version is, that Captain Cameron, when he left Godjam in November 1862, had been accompanied by an agent of the Emperor*, no doubt a spy, whom the English Consul dismissed on quitting the Abyssinian territory, whereby he had given grievous offence. He had further made a long excursion into the cotton-districts of Sennar and Kalabat, for the purpose of inspecting them, with a view to the commercial interests of England ; and Theodore, not understanding how a diplomatic agent could be interested in commercial matters, had imagined Captain Cameron to have gone to concert measures with his mortal enemies the Egyptians, and had treated him accordingly †.

Earl Russell, in his despatch to Colonel Stanton of October 5th, 1865, represents the matter in this distorted form :—"It appears, further, that the chief cause of the Emperor's anger with Consul Cameron *was this journey*

* Namely, Samuel.

† 'Revue des deux Mondes,' Dec. 1, 1864, p. 615.

to *Bogos*, coupled with the Emperor's suspicion that Consul Cameron had intrigued to set the Turks and Egyptians of the frontier against him, and aggravated in some degree by the return of Consul Cameron to Gondar without any answer to the Emperor's letter to the Queen.

“ It appears from King Theodore's letter to Mr. Rassam, sent home by that gentleman in his letter of the 5th of September, that the King alleges that Captain Cameron ‘ abused and denounced him as a murderer ’ in consequence of the vengeance which he took on the persons who killed Consul Plowden and Mr. Bell, and that, when he had treated him well and asked him to make him (the King) a friend of the Queen, Captain Cameron ‘ went and stayed some time with the Turks, and returned to me (the King); ’ and further, that when the King spoke to Captain Cameron about the letter sent by him to the Queen, he said he had not received any intelligence concerning it.

“ There is no reason to suppose that Consul Cameron incited the Egyptian forces on the frontier to commit aggressions on the territory of Abyssinia. It is far more probable that the enemies of the British name in Abyssinia should have infused unjust suspicions into the mind of the Emperor. But certainly Captain Cameron, in going to *Bogos*, acted without orders, and incurred the displeasure of his own Government ”*.

It is to be expected that some inquiry will be made in Parliament as to the meaning and object of these representations of the late Secretary of State for Foreign

* Parl. Paper, 1866, ‘ Further Correspondence, ’ &c., p. 63.

Affairs. Bogos, as we know, is a part of Abyssinia; Consul Cameron's despatch from thence is dated "Bogos, *Abyssinia*, March 31, 1863"*. He went thither in company with Samuel on the Emperor's business; and though by so doing he undoubtedly "incurred the displeasure of his own Government," it is not possible—it is not true—that "the cause of the Emperor's anger with Consul Cameron was this journey to Bogos." *But into the Egyptian frontier provinces further west he went on the business of the British Government, and in pursuance of instructions from Earl Russell himself; and it was because he thus "went and stayed some time with the Turks,"* that he laid himself open to the suspicions and incurred the displeasure of the Abyssinian monarch.

Be all this as it may, it is now quite certain that from that time forward—July 1863, and it is most important to bear this early date in mind—Consul Cameron was no longer on the same friendly terms with the Emperor as he had been before quitting him on October 31st, 1862.

The breach between them could not but be widened when Consul Cameron gave the Emperor to understand, as he would have felt himself bound to do, that the oppressed Christian inhabitants of Bogos were to be left to the tender mercies of the Turks; for it would naturally have served to confirm Theodore's belief that Captain Cameron, when absent in Soudan, had been intriguing with his Mohammedan enemies; whilst his knowledge of the friendly terms on which the French and English Consuls were together, and of the enormous commercial transactions between Egypt and England, would have led

* Parl. Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 55.

him to the not unreasonable conclusion, that, for the sake of Egypt and apparently at the instigation of France, he and the Christians of Abyssinia were being betrayed and abandoned by the British Government and their representative. And he could only regard the refusal of the Government of Bombay to treat him as they had formerly treated the King of Shoa, now become his vassal, as an additional proof of this change of feeling and conduct towards him.

This state of affairs continued till September 1863, when M. Bardel returned from Paris, bringing an answer from the Emperor Napoleon to the letter addressed to him by Theodore in October of the previous year*.

As there are two versions of the contents of the letter from France and of the way in which it was received, it is proper to give them both. The first is that of M. Lejean. His statement is, that the Abyssinian monarch, "proud of this diplomatic success, called together at Gondar all the Europeans resident in Abyssinia, to be present when the Imperial message was read;" but, as he had already opened the letter and given it to be translated, its contents were soon known; "so that," says M. Lejean, "I could without indiscretion arrange beforehand with my British colleague and the most influential members of the little colony, as to our common action on the mind of the Emperor, in the sense of the instructions which I had received." As, however, the French Consul, according to his own showing, was at that time in positive disgrace and a prisoner on parole, and as the English Consul was likewise in disfavour, we may be

* See page 81.

able to estimate at its proper value this alleged arrangement.

M. Lejean then states that the official letter from the Emperor Napoleon demanded, in courteous but firm language, religious toleration for the Roman Catholic missions protected by France. And he adds, "I must do justice to the missionaries of Basle, who, directed by the English Consul and Mr. Martin Flad, their principal *leader*, had been most ready to offer me their assistance on this religious question, with a view to toleration, in accordance (as they justly said) with the spirit of enlightened Protestantism."

"But," continues M. Lejean (whose words are deserving of being quoted in full), "all this diplomacy was entirely thrown away. The Emperor had been much irritated by the passage in the letter relative to the Romish missions. 'I know,' said he, 'the tactics of European Governments when they wish to acquire possession of Oriental States. They first send missionaries, then consuls to support the missionaries, then armies to support the consuls*. I am not a Rajah of Hindostan, to be humbugged in that fashion. I prefer having at once to do with the armies.' After a series of curious and characteristic scenes, Theodore replied to what he regarded as a provocation on the part of France, by an order of expulsion to her agent"†. This occurred,

* This notion is so peculiarly *French*, that I cannot but suspect these words to have been put into Theodore's mouth by M. Lejean, like those respecting Queen Victoria and Earl Russell, cited in page 124. In my own informant's report of what took place, there is no allusion to anything of the sort having been said by the Emperor.

† 'Revue des deux Mondes,' (Dec. 1, 1864) p. 612.

according to M. Lejean, on the 28th of September, 1863.

I now proceed to give the version of another person, who was also present on the occasion, and who had no motive for misrepresenting or concealing anything that occurred.

The letter brought by M. Bardel was not from the Emperor Napoleon, but from M. Drouyn de Lhuys, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in his Imperial master's name; and, after compliments in reply to Theodore's letter, the writer stated that the Emperor had especially commissioned him to say to his Abyssinian Majesty that he extended his protection to the Roman Catholic missionaries all over the world ("dans tout l'univers"). Nothing therefore could be more agreeable to his Imperial Majesty than to learn that those clergymen were treated with the consideration which was their due. All Governments, continued the Minister, deserving of being called civilized, have accepted the principle of the freedom of religious worship, especially when the religion is a Christian one.

But now comes a part of the French Minister's letter, which *les convenances* did not permit the Consul of France even to allude to. "The Emperor has remarked," writes M. Drouyn de Lhuys to the Abyssinian Monarch, "the passage in your letter in which you manifest warlike intentions. Before undertaking a war against powerful neighbours, it is right to calculate one's own strength, and to be careful not to place in jeopardy advantages already gained. His Majesty prays to God that He will inspire you with decisions suited to the interests of the people whom you

govern, and who, as a Christian people, are the objects of his especial sympathy." The letter finished with some general phrases, as to the French Emperor's willingness to form friendly and commercial relations with Abyssinia.

There can be no doubt that the advice given in this letter was excellent; only it is to be questioned whether it was offered by the proper person and in proper season. Theodore was at that moment inveterate against the Egyptians, and most anxious to go to war with them; and having always regarded the French as their allies and abettors, the last person from whom he was likely to accept advice as to his conduct towards them was the Emperor Napoleon. He consequently decided on resenting in a signal manner the insult which he considered himself to have received.

But before taking this step, in order to manifest his feeling towards those persons whom the Emperor of the French had declared to be the special objects of his solicitude, Theodore first sent for the Coptic Abúna, with whom he had been on bad terms for some time, and became thoroughly reconciled with him—the one not less than the other being the bitter enemy of the Roman Catholics; and the prelate, in his joy at the reconciliation, vowed he would have his throat cut before he allowed a single Romish missionary to enter the country.

A week afterwards all the Europeans, seventeen in number, including the English and French Consuls, the Protestant missionaries, and the Emperor's European workmen, were summoned to witness what was to take place.

There was first a personal question between M. Lejean,

as Consul of France, and the Frenchman Bardel, which was cut short by Theodore's declaring the latter to be *his* envoy. His Majesty then stated publicly the following grounds of complaint against the Emperor Napoleon, and of dissatisfaction with his letter :—

1st. The letter had no seal affixed to it, and therefore was no formal document.

2nd. The answer to a letter written by himself to the Emperor Napoleon came, not from the Emperor in person, but from a servant (*lólýe*) of his.

3rd. The letter was, in point of fact, no answer to the contents of his (Theodore's) letter.

4th. M. Bardel had not been treated with the respect due to an Envoy from the Emperor of Ethiopia.

With a view to meet these objections, M. Lejean wished to show that *he* was the bearer of a more explicit and favourable answer, respecting the reception in Paris of an Abyssinian embassy; but Theodore would not listen to his explanation, as he said his present envoy (M. Bardel) had not been well received.

The result was that Theodore positively rejected the friendship of France, tore the French Minister's letter in pieces and trod it underfoot, and said that, if the quarrel between himself and the Emperor Napoleon had to be decided by the sword, there was a youth (*góbaz*) above, who would fight for him*.

* The celestial champion here appealed to is the *Farasénýa* (Horseman), as St. George is called—that saint being, as in the Greek Church, the especial patron of soldiers, and so much revered by the Abyssinians that he is looked on as one of the Persons of their "Trinity." In an article on "Christianity among the Gallas," in the

The French Consul and Dr. Legard were then peremptorily ordered to quit the Emperor's dominions. Two days afterwards the two Frenchmen were furnished with a passport, but without being allowed to take leave of his Majesty personally; and they immediately made the best of their way to the coast. M. Lejean himself acknowledges that he hastened to Massowah before the news of his disgrace, spread along the road, should cause the local authorities to place obstacles in the way of his journey. He was likewise anxious, no doubt, to transmit the disagreeable news home with his own imprint on it.

In the debate in the House of Commons on June 30th, 1865, Mr. Layard said that, when the letter from the Emperor Napoleon was presented, the Emperor Theodore "quarrelled with the French Consul, threw him into prison, and loaded him with chains. He released him after five or six weeks, and then ignominiously expelled him from the country"*.

The "one halfpenny-worth of bread to this intolerable deal of sack" is the following anecdote related by M. Lejean himself:—As he and his colleague were breakfasting together on the morning of the former's expulsion, Cameron said to him laughingly, "Well, my friend, are the chains of the Negus heavy?" "Should you like to try them?" asked Lejean in the same tone. "Well, who knows?" was the reply of the unfortunate Representative of Great Britain. But this conversation referred to the occurrence in March previous,

'British Magazine' for June 1847, I have alluded to this and other similar errors.

* 'Times,' July 1, 1865.

when, however, M. Lejean had been put in chains for only a few hours*.

A few days after M. Lejean's departure, namely, on October 8th, 1863, Consul Cameron wrote thus from Gondar to his family:—"The business of the French Consul is a disagreeable affair. I have kept myself aloof on the whole; but I offered my services to the Consul, which he was generous enough not to accept, lest it might injure my own mission, *especially as King Theodore has taken it into his head that I have been intriguing against him in Egypt.* He is a fine fellow, but does not understand foreign politics or foreign manners. My own fate rests on the turn of a die. I am still waiting for answers to my letters of last year from the King's camp. If the King intercepts them when they come, I suppose I shall be sent packing after my colleague."

At that time, though the British Consul was a prisoner on parole, no hand had been laid on him or any of his people; neither did he then anticipate any act of violence. But the storm which had long been lowering, at length broke over his devoted head.

A messenger, with letters sent by Captain Cameron, was stopped on the way from Gondar to Massowah by the Governor of the province of Woggera, who seized the letters and sent the messenger back to Gondar. Captain Cameron having complained to the Emperor of this outrage, the latter took the messenger with him into Woggera, and sent him to the Governor to demand the letters back. He was told that they were lost; and on his repeating this to his Majesty, the latter (who by this time

* See page 91.

had doubtless become acquainted with the contents of the letters) replied, "He has done you justice: give him (the servant) stripes into the bargain."

The date of this occurrence, as far as I possess the means of fixing it, was the 15th of October, 1863, at which time Consul Cameron had been for about three months under surveillance and prevented from quitting the country. It is not possible at the present moment to explain the specific motive for the stoppage of his letters, though it is most probable that Theodore wished to know how that officer had reported to the British Government the proceedings of the 28th of September.

It is however also very likely that by this time, (October 15th, 1863), Earl Russell's reply to Consul Cameron's important communication from the Emperor's camp in Godjam of October 31st, 1862*, had reached Abyssinia. In the return to the Address to the Crown on Lord Chelmsford's motion of May 22nd, 1865, that reply is given as having "arrived at Gondar about November, 1863;" but there was ample time for its arrival at this earlier date, and my own impression is that it did so arrive. I therefore insert it here as in its proper place:—

"*Foreign Office, April 22nd, 1863.*

"SIR,—With reference to your despatch of the 31st of October last, I have to state to you that it is not desirable for Her Majesty's Agents to meddle in the affairs of Abyssinia, and you would have done better had you returned to your post at Massowah when the King told you to do so. This it will be right that you should do at

* See page 67 *et seq.*

once, and you will remain at Massowah until further orders.

“You will of course keep Her Majesty’s Government fully and accurately informed of French proceedings in Abyssinia.

“I am, &c.,

“RUSSELL.”

It must not be forgotten that Consul Cameron’s despatch of October 31st, 1862, contained the Emperor’s letter to the Queen, which is thus contemptuously ignored altogether.

If the fact be as I surmise, and if it should also prove to be the case that Earl Russell’s despatches, like those of Consul Cameron himself, were intercepted, as he had anticipated, the whole matter becomes yet plainer and more intelligible. Indeed, it must continue to do so as additional facts are brought to light.

CHAPTER VII.

PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES—NOT IMPLICATED IN DISPUTES BETWEEN EMPEROR AND CONSUL—IMPUTATIONS AGAINST THEM UNFOUNDED—COMMENCEMENT OF THEIR MISFORTUNES—LETTERS FROM MR. STERN AND MR. ROSENTHAL—BISHOP GOBAT'S LAY MISSIONARIES—LONDON SOCIETY'S MISSION—SCOTTISH MISSION—DIFFERENCES AMONG MISSIONARIES—MR. LAYARD ON MISSIONS—MR. STERN'S MEETING WITH THE EMPEROR—HIS SERVANT BEATEN TO DEATH—HIMSELF LIKEWISE BEATEN—CONSUL'S INTERCESSION REJECTED—MR. STERN'S PRIVATE PAPERS—DENOUNCED BY M. BARDEL—HIS CHARACTER—ALL EUROPEANS IMPRISONED—TRIAL OF STERN AND ROSENTHAL—"THE KOSSO-SELLER'S SON"—THEIR CONDEMNATION—ARRIVAL OF MR. KERANS—CONSUL AGAIN ORDERED TO MASSOWAH—NO ANSWER FROM THE QUEEN—CONSUL IMPRISONED—THEODORE'S SINGULAR PROCLAMATION.

It cannot but have occurred to every one who has read thus far, if at all acquainted with the subject of the captivity of our countrymen in its ordinary form, that throughout the events narrated the Protestant missionaries in Abyssinia, so long Consul Cameron's companions in bonds, have not once been mentioned except incidentally. In fact, as far as the breach between the Emperor of Abyssinia and the representative of the British Government is concerned, those missionaries may be regarded as not being at all in the country—as having no existence whatever! And yet it has been repeatedly asserted, and the popular belief notoriously is, that it was with one of those missionaries, the Rev. Henry A. Stern, that the Emperor was displeased in the first instance, and that, through Consul Cameron's generous though

injudicious interference on his behalf, he himself fell into like disgrace; whilst, by quitting his post at Massowah without orders, this officer incurred at the same time the displeasure of his own Government.

From the preceding pages, it is manifest that there is not one word of truth in these statements, which, with many others, of an equally fabulous character*, would seem to have been made and intentionally put into circulation, with no other object than to turn the eyes of Parliament and of the public in a direction diametrically opposed to the right one.

Mr. Stern has told his own sad story of how his misfortunes commenced, in a letter to his wife, dated from Amba Magdala in April 1865, which was published about a twelvemonth ago among the 'Letters from the Captive Missionaries,' circulated by the Committee of the Abyssinian Captives Liberation Fund.

The principal portions of that letter are reproduced in the Appendix to the present work, together with other

* Among other absurd stories, the following was circulated in the French newspapers, and copied into some of the English ones:— "Letters from Abyssinia state that Theodore, Emperor of that country, has just crowned his imperial eccentricities by an act which exceeds them all in extravagance. Having learned of the widowhood of Queen Victoria, he has had a letter written to her offering her his hand. Mr. Cameron, the English consul, was charged to forward this missive to his Sovereign. The reply to so unforeseen an offer not being immediately forthcoming, the Emperor Theodore got angry, and had Mr. Cameron put in chains until His Majesty should have obtained satisfaction for such a want of attention to him. On hearing of the imprisonment of Mr. Cameron, Her Britannic Majesty is said to have decided on replying by a polite refusal, the sending of which by post was more economic than a special mission to Abyssinia." See the 'Sun' of August 6th, 1864; and see also the 'Times' of September 9th following.

subsequent communications from Mr. Stern and his companion, Mr. Rosenthal. They give a detailed and connected narrative of the barbarous treatment to which they have been subjected, and they form a tale of horrors such as probably never was surpassed. Referring, then, to the letters of the two unfortunate missionaries, it remains for me to give merely a summary of the principal events, derived partly from Mr. Stern's statements, and more fully in some particulars from other authentic sources.

To render the history complete and intelligible, it will be necessary to go back to the epoch of the banishment of Msgr. de' Jacobis and his clergy by the newly crowned Emperor Theodore in the beginning of 1855, narrated in a former page*.

By an extraordinary coincidence, on the very day on which the fugitives reached Halai on the frontiers, the Protestant missionary, Dr. Krapf, who had been expelled both from Tigre and from Shoa, was a third time entering Abyssinia, accompanied by the Rev. Martin Flad, for the purpose of establishing a mission in that country, at the instance, under the auspices, and with the direct support of Bishop Gobat of Jerusalem. The moment of Dr. Krapf's arrival was most opportune, and permission was readily granted by the new Sovereign and the Abuna for the establishment of a mission, the first members of which arrived out in April 1856, being followed by others at a later date. This time, however, the missionaries were not ordained priests, but lay handicraftsmen, who followed their usual vocations in conjunction with their missionary

* See page 39.

labours. These latter were however confined to reading, teaching, and distributing the Scriptures in the native languages, for which purpose they were supplied by the British and Foreign Bible Society with books and money to the amount of nearly £1000.

Encouraged by the success which had attended Bishop Gobat's mission, the Rev. Henry A. Stern arrived in Abyssinia in the early part of 1860, as the agent of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, for the purpose of establishing a mission among the Falashas or native Israelites; and after obtaining the consent of the Emperor and the Abuna, he returned to England, to take measures for the extension of his mission. Whilst at home, Mr. Stern prepared for publication a work entitled 'Wanderings among the Falashas of Abyssinia,' giving a narrative of the events that had occurred during his first visit; and after having been detained some time in London, in order that he might meet Consul Cameron, as has already been related *, he returned to Abyssinia, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal, reaching the missionary-station at Djenda in the early part of 1863. It is proper to add here, that Mr. Flad subsequently left Bishop Gobat's mission and joined that of the London Society. •

At a later date a Scottish mission was established in Abyssinia, the members of which were the Rev. Messrs. Steiger and Brandeis.

Unfortunately certain differences arose between Mr. Stern and the members of Bishop Gobat's lay mission, of which differences Mr. Layard thus spoke in the House of Commons on June 30th, 1865 :—“ Let me mention a fact

* See page 69.

of importance in relation to this question. There are in Abyssinia three missionary establishments, and I am sorry to say that, as usual, they are intensely jealous of one another. These establishments consist of a German mission from Basle, a Protestant mission from this country, and a French Propagandist mission. The Basle missionaries hated the English with an intensity of which some conception may be formed from the amiable pages of the 'Standard'—if anybody reads that paper—in which some letters on the subject have recently appeared. The Roman Catholics hated all the others. The King had no love for any of them, and said, 'I have nothing to do with preaching the Gospel; but if you can be of any use to me, I shall be very glad that you should stay.' In consequence of this decision the members of the Basle mission were compelled to turn their attention to the manufacture of muskets; but, as they produced very bad weapons, they turned with better success to trading in brandy. Mr. Stern was allowed to deal with the Jews and Mahomedans, but was strictly prohibited from converting any of the native Abyssinians. The Roman Catholic mission was expelled the country" *.

* Comment from me on the tone and evident spirit of this statement is not called for; neither is it requisite to inquire how far the particulars of it are correct or not. All that may be affirmed—though no reader of my work will deem even this necessary—is, that whatever differences there may have been, their existence was *not* "a fact of importance in relation to the question" of the Emperor's quarrel with Consul Cameron and the English; which

* 'Times,' July 1, 1865.

quarrel was, and is in truth, the real and only *original* question, whatever other questions may have been raised by the subsequent complication of affairs resulting from it. And even had "jealousies" or "hatreds"—to use Mr. Layard's expressions—existed between the members of Bishop Gobat's lay mission and the "English" missionaries, there is not the slightest reason for imagining that the Emperor would have troubled himself about such insignificant matters, as long as he and the British Government continued to be good friends.

For myself, I have never taken the trouble to investigate the subject, believing it to be altogether of secondary importance; and so I have earnestly and invariably endeavoured to persuade the friends of both parties in England with whom I have occasionally come in contact. As far, however, as I understand the question, Mr. Stern, on his first visit to Abyssinia, was led to form the opinion that the members of Bishop Gobat's lay mission were altogether too secular in their occupations, for that they led rather the lives of ordinary workmen in the Emperor's service than that of readers, teachers, and distributors of the Scriptures; and I believe he wrote home to that effect. Inquiries were made and explanations given; and when Mr. Stern arrived out a second time, in the beginning of 1863, though at first there was not unnaturally some little coolness between him and Bishop Gobat's lay missionaries, still that soon passed over, and (unless I am misinformed) they have ever since been on friendly terms.

It was in the beginning of April 1863, as already mentioned, that Mr. Stern returned to Abyssinia and resumed his missionary labours, which, despite of obstacles, were suc-

cessful and promising. In June, Captain Cameron arrived at the mission-station at Djenda, on his return from the north. In the following month the Emperor, who had been at some distance, also came quite accidentally into the neighbourhood. During his stay, Mr. Stern heard several times that he was annoyed with Captain Cameron for the reasons already stated*; but Mr. Stern himself does not appear to have seen or had any communication with the Emperor, he having gone to visit the Faláshas in various districts, and having at the end of August set out for Armatjoho, a province to the north-west of the missionary station.

On September 20th, Mr. Stern came back to Djenda, and on the evening of his return was summoned to Gondar, to hear the reading of the letter which M. Bardel had brought from the Emperor of the French. There was nothing personal in this summons, which was issued in common to all the Europeans in the country.

The occurrences of that eventful day are already recorded †. The immediate result is thus simply related by Mr. Stern:—"M. Lejean and M. Legard, a French physician, were peremptorily required to quit Abyssinia; and the rest returned to their respective homes." But he adds, significantly, "The crisis, which for some time had been looming in the distance, was now drawing nearer and nearer. All felt that there was something impending; but even the most timid dreaded nothing beyond the seizure of property and expulsion from the country."

How completely this corresponds with the expressions in Consul Cameron's letters written to his family on Oc-

* See page 94.

† See pages 97-101.

tober 8th, a few days after the two French agents had been expelled the country*.

Up to the middle of October 1863, I am unable to trace any cause whatever for the Emperor's anger against the missionaries. On the contrary, they would seem to have enjoyed just as much of his favour as they required, the summit of their desires being that they might be allowed to pursue their labours unmolested.

On the morning of October 15th, as has been already related †, Consul Cameron's messenger was beaten by order of the Emperor, who was then encamped in Wóggera, near Gondar. In the afternoon of the same day Mr. Stern approached the camp, and stopped to pay his respects to the Emperor, as in duty bound. It was not till the evening that the Monarch left his tent and came into the open air, where Stern and his two servants had been waiting more than two hours. The time was most inopportune, the Emperor having been at table. A frown was on his countenance: with the thought on his mind of what had taken place in the morning, he was assuredly in no good humour with Englishmen or those belonging to them, and the merest trifle sufficed to drive him beyond all bounds. Mr. Stern's address to His Majesty appears to have been badly interpreted by the servants, and the Emperor became so angry that he ordered them to be beaten—probably with the very sticks with which the English Consul's messenger had been punished that same morning. Mr. Stern, under alarm and excitement, happened to bite his thumb—an action which in that country, as elsewhere, is considered

* See page 101.

† See page 103.

a threat of revenge. The Emperor had not at first noticed this action; but his attention having been directed to it by some of his officers who were Stern's enemies, the latter was likewise severely beaten. The two servants died the same night, from the effects of their punishment.

The British Consul, who was at Gondar a prisoner at large, sent immediately to Mr. Flad, requesting him to go to the Emperor with him as his interpreter. But Theodore refused to admit Captain Cameron to his presence, desiring him to say in writing what he had to say. He accordingly wrote to the Emperor a letter, in which he reminded him of the friendship that had so long subsisted between England and Abyssinia; whereupon he was asked, "Where are the proofs of that friendship?"

The punishment which Mr. Stern received was so severe that for some time his life was despaired of; and Mr. Flad obtained leave to visit him daily and take charge of his recovery. When his health was somewhat restored, Mr. Stern was taken to Gondar chained to a soldier. Here his papers were searched, but nothing criminatory was found among them; and as the Emperor's anger against him appears to have been only of a temporary nature—it being, in truth, founded on no specific cause of complaint—the monarch wrote, in the beginning of November, to his European workmen at Gaffat, namely Bishop Gobat's Scripture readers, that he had tortured Stern long enough, and that, if they approved of it, they should come to Gondar and reconcile them, according to the Abyssinian usage when two parties have injured one another or are otherwise at variance. The form of this reconciliation would have been, that, after the mediator

(*astáráki*) had admonished them to mutual forgiveness, Mr. Stern would have begged pardon for anything he might have done amiss, and the Emperor, on his side, would have begged Stern's pardon for the wrong he had done him. I repeat, therefore, that this is a proof that at the beginning of November 1863, nearly four months after the Emperor had quarrelled with Consul Cameron, he had no serious cause of complaint against Stern; whereas he continued on such unfriendly terms with the former, that, in the middle of October, he would neither admit him to his presence nor listen to his representations in writing.

Mr. Stern's prospects were thus looking bright and hopeful, when a most calamitous change took place. Under the belief that the persons and property of Europeans were inviolable, Mr. Stern had incautiously recorded, both in his manuscript note-book and in his printed work, of which he had taken a copy with him to Abyssinia, facts and opinions more or less derogatory to the Emperor Theodore. During his illness, he had employed himself, as best he could, in erasing from his journals and other papers the offensive passages. But unfortunately he had mentioned their existence to M. Bardel, and that individual made known the fact to the Emperor.

Mr. Stern, in alluding to this, says, "I know by whom, but will not, without positive proof, give the name." Mr. Steiger is not so reserved, but expresses himself respecting M. Bardel in the following unmeasured terms:—"He had come to Abyssinia three years ago as Secretary to the English Consul, but had been sent to France with a letter to the Emperor Napoleon. When he returned from Paris

with an official answer, he brought at the same time a private commission from the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, and his Jesuit friends, to endeavour by all means to destroy the Protestant missions in Abyssinia, and to plant Roman Catholic missionaries in their stead—the price for his endeavours being a Vice-consulship. He did his best to execute his commission, and did it with subtlety and ingenuity which is truly surprising, and which none but a Frenchman taught in a Jesuit school—I had almost said the Devil's—could have learnt. But truly the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men; and wonderfully has the saying been fulfilled, 'He that diggeth a pit for others, will surely fall into it himself.' Through his own intrigues he has fallen; for ere his work was completed his punishment came, and he is now in prison, chained, with Mr. Stern, whose fall he had so desperately striven to compass. When he saw his plans frustrated, *he confessed his wickedness to his companions, whose captivity he shares in the fortress of Magdala**. This was written in December 1864; since which time much has to be related concerning M. Bardel's proceedings. Without wishing to anticipate what will best be told in its proper place, I will merely mention here that, on July 6th 1866, M. Bardel, who was then again in the Emperor's favour, had Mr. Rassam, Consul Cameron, Mr. Stern, and the other European captives given into his charge, to be taken to prison at Amba Magdala.

M. Bardel's denouncement would appear not to have been limited to Mr. Stern. The result of it was, that on

* See the 'Record' of September 6, 1865.

November 13th, 1863, a body of troops came to Djenda, seized most of the missionaries including Mrs. Flad, and, after binding them, conducted them to Gondar, treating them most ignominiously by the way. On the following day they reached the Emperor's camp, where heavier chains were laid on them; and Mr. Rosenthal, who had previously been left at liberty, was also bound.

All the Europeans in the country, the English Consul not excepted, were next made prisoners, their papers seized, and their goods confiscated. The prisoners were dragged into the presence of the Emperor, who, when he saw them, was actually *red* with anger.

After some investigation the artisan missionaries were set at liberty, and their goods restored to them, the Emperor sending for them, receiving them in the most friendly way, and calling them his children. The members of the Scottish mission were likewise released, there being no specific charge against any one but Stern, Rosenthal, and Mrs. Flad. Meanwhile these latter were almost starved; and it was only with great difficulty that Mr. Flad contrived to supply them with food. A day was now appointed for their trial, at which Theodore said the other Europeans in the country should be their judges.

On the 20th of November a court was held, to which all the Europeans were summoned. On an elevation sat the Emperor, and behind him, on an *alga* or couch, the Etjegye, or superior of the monks. On the ground beside the throne were Zander and Bardel—a German and a Frenchman! In the middle of the open space sat the other Europeans in rows, and behind them the Abyssinian grandees. Many thousand spectators formed a

semicircle beyond them. The two prisoners, bound by the arm, stood opposite the Monarch, both of them, and Stern especially, looking so squalid and wretched that it was pitiable to behold.

Various charges were brought against the prisoners, one against Stern being that in his book he had called the execution of the rebels who had killed Messrs. Plowden and Bell a cold-blooded murder*. Another was the expression of the opinion that a war between Theodore and a foreign power would remove intolerance and introduce religious liberty. But the principal grievance appears to have been Mr. Stern's publication in Europe of the fact that Theodore's mother was a poor woman, who sold *kosso*, the well-known anthelmintic, now of not unfrequent use in Europe. The fact is notorious in Abyssinia; and before Theodore came to his greatness he was not ashamed of his origin. An amusing anecdote is told of how, having conquered a chief of Ras Ali's army, who had promised to bring "the kosso-seller's son" dead or alive into the presence of the Ras's mother, Oizoro Ménen, he invited him to dinner; when, instead of mead, the ordinary beverage of the country, he placed before him a bottle containing an infusion of kosso, and thus addressed him:—"I am, as you have truly said, only the son of a poor kosso-seller; and as my mother has not disposed of anything to day, I am sure you will not refuse her your custom;" and he made him swallow the nauseous draught to the very dregs. It is therefore unworthy of him to think of concealing his origin, and of claiming*

* The passage in Mr. Stern's work where the expression occurs is given in a note to page 60.

instead to be of the ancient royal family of Ethiopia—an idea, however, to which he now attaches the greatest importance, and which (according to Dr. Krapf) he is said to have stated strongly in his late correspondence with the Emperor Napoleon, in order to outdo the latter in respect of genealogy*.

Mr. Rosenthal had also spoken ill of the Emperor, saying that it would be far better for the country to be under the rule of the Turks (Egyptians) than of Theodore; and as at that time two Turkish armies were reported to be advancing against Abyssinia, supported by the French, it may well be understood how this must have exasperated the Emperor. It is proper to state what these two armies really were.

One of them was that under Músa Pasha, an old and experienced officer, who had served under Ibrahim Pasha, and who arrived at Khartum during the summer of 1862, with 4000 regular troops and several rifled cannon. He passed the winter in exercising his troops, with the avowed intention of invading Abyssinia. In January 1863 he advanced slowly, at the head of a body of 10,000 or 12,000 men in all, on Kalabat, of which district Matamma is the capital, reaching it about the middle of the following month. He remained there only a few days, during which short time he devastated and completely ruined the country, and he then returned to Khartum. Towards the end of the year, it was reported that he was about to undertake a campaign against Abys-

* See ‘Christian Work’ for December 1st, 1864. Theodore’s proclamation given in pages 125–127 may perhaps have some bearing on this correspondence with the Emperor of the French.

sinia; but there does not appear to have been any foundation for the report.

The other "army" consisted of a body of fifty or sixty drilled soldiers, of various European nations with several officers, under the command of Comte de Bisson, a French subject, formerly a general in the Neapolitan service, who arrived at Khartum towards the end of 1863, with the alleged intention of forming an agricultural colony in the debatable country of Bogos, rendered memorable by the visits of Consuls Plowden and Cameron in 1854 and 1863*. M. de Bisson received at first every assistance from the Egyptian authorities, enlisted several hundred Nubians, and was escorted from Kassalah as far as the district of Barea by a body of 200 Egyptian soldiers. But he having decided on remaining in Barea, where he began to form a permanent camp with the alleged object of protecting himself from the attacks of the natives, the Mudir of Taka sent 700 men to dislodge him and bring him back to Kassalah, whence he returned to Egypt about the middle of 1864 †. I am not acquainted with his subsequent proceedings; but I know that several of the members of his "French colony in Abyssinia" were in Tigre during the present year, 1866.

Returning now to the trial of the unfortunate missionaries, it has to be related that, after they had been examined, the Emperor caused to be read out a list of his victories, thirty in number, being fifteen before and fifteen after his accession to the throne; next, a table setting out his alleged descent from Menilek, the son of King Solomon

* See pages 25-29, 83-85.

† See the 'Times' of August 30th, 1864.

and the Queen of Sheba; and lastly, that portion of the *Fetha Negest* (the Abyssinian code, founded on that of Justinian), by which death is made the penalty of reviling the Sovereign, this offence coming within the *crimen læsæ majestatis* of the Roman law. *

The Emperor is said to have next called on the Europeans present, beginning with the English Consul, to declare whether the prisoners were guilty or not of the charges brought against them. They could only answer in the affirmative. He then asked the prisoners what they had to say against judgement being pronounced. This, in the opinion of some of the persons present, was the critical moment. They think that, had Mr. Stern and Mr. Rosenthal confessed their fault, expressed their contrition, and asked for pardon, the other Europeans might have interceded for them, and they would most likely have been set at liberty; but, instead of this, they tried to justify, or at least to extenuate, their conduct; which prevented the others from interfering, and only exasperated the Emperor. If this really be the case, it only shows how entirely the Emperor's anger with the missionaries was of a casual and transient character, quite different from his feeling towards the Consul, which had a fixed and permanent cause.

The monarch then consulted his grandees as to what should be done to the prisoners. Ras Hailu (the highest executive officer) advised that they should be put to death; but the Waag-Shum (the highest territorial chief*) and

* This is not Waag-shum Góbazyé, but his cousin Taférrí, on whom the Emperor has conferred the title, after having killed Waag-Shum Gebra Medhin, Góbazyé's father.

others dissuaded him from it. The counsel of the latter prevailed, and the lives of the prisoners were spared, though they were still kept in close confinement.

Mrs. Flad had also been arraigned for speaking disparagingly of the Emperor, but was immediately pardoned out of regard for her husband.

As if it were only to complicate matters and make them worse, two days after the trial of Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal (that is to say, on Sunday, November 22nd), a young Irishman, named Kerans, arrived at Gondar, bringing despatches from the Foreign Office to Consul Cameron, "with a kind of reprimand, and instructions to go to his post at Massowah."

The despatch thus brought by Mr. Kerans may possibly have been that from Earl Russell of April 22nd, 1863, supposing it not to have arrived in October*, as I believe it did; but it is more likely to have been the following one, dated August 13th, from Mr. Murray, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:—

"I am directed by Earl Russell to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch of the 31st of March last †, suggesting that you should be formally authorized to purchase what you may require, whenever possible, with the view of freeing yourself from the interference of the King of Abyssinia's officers:

"In reply, I am to refer you to Lord Russell's despatch of the 22nd of April last, and to state to you that as you have been ordered to return to and remain at Massowah, your proposal need not be considered.

"I am also to remind you, with reference to the

* See page 104.

† Namely, from Bogos: see page 83.

expressions 'Envoy' and 'Mission,' which repeatedly occur in your despatch, that, as Her Majesty's Consul at Massowah, you hold no representative character in Abyssinia."

This last assertion renders necessary the remark that Captain Cameron, like his predecessor Mr. Plowden, was appointed "Her Majesty's Consul in *Abyssinia*" and gazetted as such*; and he was expressly accredited to the Emperor Theodore by Earl Russell, in his letter to that monarch of February 20th, 1862†.

There was no answer to the letter addressed by the Emperor to Queen Victoria more than a twelvemonth before ‡, either from the Queen herself or from Earl Russell in Her Majesty's name; nor was that letter even alluded to in the despatches to the Consul.

To repeat the words of a person who was present on the occasion:—"This was, at the moment, a most untoward event. *The Consul had previously had his hands only half bound; they were now bound altogether.* Theodore was angry, and not without cause. He had a right to expect a reply of some kind from England, and a favourable answer would doubtless have put him in the best possible humour: for he desired above all things the friendship of England. But now," adds the reporter of these proceedings, "it is most improbable that the Emperor will ever liberate the captives, or even let the Consul go free, unless the expected letters arrive."

These occurrences have been repeated here as they were related by one who was present on the occasion. M. Lejean, who was not present (for he had left Gondar

* See page 65.

† See pages 67, 68.

‡ See page 78.

nearly two months previously*), gives a totally imaginary account of these proceedings. He says, in particular, that the Emperor "was offended at receiving from the Foreign Office a letter signed by Earl Russell, and not by the Queen herself. 'I wrote to Victoria,' said he, angrily, 'and not to this Mister Russell (*Aito* Russell), whom I don't at all know.'"

But, as has long been known but too well, the fact is that no letter whatever was written to the Emperor either by Lord Russell or by the Queen; so that it stands to reason he did not utter the words put into his mouth by M. Lejean. Consequently the latter has taken an unwarrantable liberty with the names of both Her Majesty and her Minister; and it can scarcely be doubted that the words which he has had the assurance to apply to them are merely an adaptation of those which the Abyssinian monarch really did use on the previous 28th of September, with reference to the letter signed by the French minister†, which M. Bardel delivered:—"I wrote to Napoleon, and not to this Mister Drouyn de Lhuys, whom I don't know at all."

Strangely enough, Mr. Kerans brought with him, as a present to the Emperor, a carpet, on which were represented a zouave attacking a lion, and behind the former a mounted European. Theodore at once interpreted this in the following fashion:—The lion was himself (the "Lion of Judah" being the arms of the Emperors of Ethiopia, as the descendants of King Solomon); the zouave represented the Turks (Egyptians) attacking him; and the horseman was *the French*, backing up the Egyptians.

* See page 102.

† See page 101.

“ But where,” exclaimed he, “ are the English, to back up the lion ? ”

There can be no doubt of this being his master passion, fostered, as it has been, by the friendship and material assistance of Consul Plowden and Mr. Bell ; and inasmuch as the former's partisanship had been authorized, or at the least permitted, during so many years by the British Government, the fact of Consul Cameron's being forbidden to continue to follow his predecessor's example, especially after he had commenced doing so, could only be regarded as an act of hostility ; and the Emperor's conduct towards all the Europeans resident in his country, being either Englishmen or persons under English protection, was in the nature of reprisals.

Probably about this time, and as would seem in consequence of the notoriety given to the fact of the low condition of the Emperor's mother, the monarch thought fit to issue a proclamation to his Abyssinian subjects and the Europeans within his country, of which the following is a translation :—

“ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one God.

“ The King of Kings, Theodore, created by the Trinity its servant, installed by it and made Prince : to his children given to him by God and to all the Franks (Europeans).

“ By your God and the God of your friend Theodore, who appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai and in the Red Sea ; who appeared to Joshua at Jericho ; who through his servant Samuel anointed Saul when he was seeking the asses that were lost ; who, when Saul turned from his Creator, commanded Samuel to anoint David.

“Solomon was King after David, according to the word of the prophet and of his father, notwithstanding that Adonias [Adonijah], against the will of God, was proclaimed King by the people and obtained favour in their sight. Solomon, by the Queen of Azyeb [the south-east], begat Menilek, who became King of Ethiopia. From Menilek down to the dynasty of the Gallas, all the Kings were stage-players (*azmári**), who sought from God neither wisdom nor strength; but, with His help, the means of raising up the empire were found, when God chose me, His servant, to be King.

“My countrymen said, ‘the river is dried up, its bed is empty,’ and they insulted me because my mother was poor, and called me the son of a beggar. But the Turks knew the greatness of my father, who made them his tributaries as far as the frontiers of Egypt and to the gates of their cities. My father and my mother descended from David and from Solomon, and they are also of the seed of Abraham, the servant of God.

“Now, those who insulted me with the name of a beggar’s son, are themselves beggars and beg for their daily bread. Without God’s will neither wisdom nor power can save from ruin. Nevertheless, as God said unto Adam, ‘in the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread,’ it is necessary not to fall into slothfulness. But it is needless for me to give you this advice; for, as the proverb says, ‘speak not of wisdom to the sage, neither cut the food of a lion.’

“There is nothing powerful in the world. Many have had mortars and cannons in abundance, and nevertheless

* Literally “singers” or “minstrels.”

have succumbed. Napoleon had myriads of them, yet he died conquered, after having subjugated the Franks. Nicholas, Emperor of the Muscovites, possessed them in abundance, and he was vanquished by the French, the English, and the Turks, and died without having accomplished the desire of his heart.

“If in your countries you meet with any partisans of the brigand Negúsyé, who shall say, like the traitors of this country, that Ethiopia is governed by the son of a beggar; wager with them a field covered with gold that I, the present Emperor, am on the throne of my fathers, Abraham and David, and bring them here to be confronted with me.

“It is God ‘that hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree.’”

The only comment on this most singular document that is necessary is, that it completely disproves the supposition of Mr. Stern's having been in any way concerned in the original promulgation in Europe of the fact of the low condition of Theodore's mother. Indeed, the allusion in it to Negúsyé and his partisans in Europe—namely the French—who “like the traitors of this country” had given currency to the report, might lead to the impression that this proclamation was of an earlier date than is here assigned to it.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONTINUED ILL-TREATMENT OF MISSIONARIES—MR. FLAD'S PROPOSED JOURNEY TO ENGLAND—CONSUL'S REQUEST TO LEAVE—IMPRISONMENT OF ALL EUROPEANS—ABYSSINIANS DEPRIVED OF CONVENT AT JERUSALEM—CONSUL FINN REMOVED—CONSUL MOORE APPOINTED—HIS REFUSAL OF PROTECTION—EARL RUSSELL'S INSTRUCTIONS—MEMORIAL TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH—ABYSSINIA CLAIMED BY TURKEY—TRANSFERRED TO EGYPT—EGYPTIAN OCCUPATION—"THE ABYSSINIAN QUESTION"—M. BARDEL'S RETURN AND IMPRISONMENT—CONSUL CAMERON'S LETTER HOME—CAPTIVES TORTURED—THE CONVERT MAKERER—REPEATED TORTURE OF CAPTIVES—THEIR REMOVAL TO AMBA MAGDALA—DESCRIPTION OF FORTRESS PRISON—CAPTIVES DOUBLE-IRONED—THEIR RELEASE—CONSUL CAMERON'S LETTER TO THE AUTHOR—ARRIVAL OF NEWS IN ENGLAND.

FROM the day of their trial until the 4th of December 1863, the two wretched missionaries remained in suspense as to their final doom. On that day they were summoned before the Emperor, interrogated, stripped naked, and so conducted back to their prison. They heard afterwards that they had been in imminent peril, for that the knives to cut off their hands and feet were actually lying close to the spot where they had stood; and that they were only saved from this fate by the intercession and energetic remonstrances of the Etjegye.

A fortnight after this, an opening for their liberation again presented itself. Mr. Flad was going to Europe, and it was proposed that Mr. Stern should furnish him "with letters to procure machines and one or two gunpowder makers"—much in the same way as he is now doing nearly two years later; and on his return Mr.

Stern would be allowed to leave the country loaded with favours. Whilst the negotiations with this object were in progress, Consul Cameron, unaware of what was going on, again applied for leave to go to his post at Massowah, in pursuance of orders from the British Government. This once more proved fatal to the prospects of the prisoners; and on January 4th, 1864, Captain Cameron, his European attendants, and all the missionaries, were put in fetters, and together with Stern and Rosenthal confined in one common prison within the royal enclosure.

Mr. Steiger, a member of the Scottish Mission, reported to his Society at home that the cause of this his second imprisonment was not merely the English Consul's desire to leave the Court, without redeeming his promise to bring an answer to the Emperor's letter to the Queen, but the fact that at the same moment the head of the Abyssinian convent at Jerusalem arrived out there, and "told the King all that had happened at Jerusalem in connexion with the expulsion of the Abyssinians from their convent. He reported that the Coptic priests had endeavoured, with the aid of the Turkish Government, to appropriate the Abyssinian convent to themselves, that the Abyssinian Monks, of course, opposed this deed of wrong, upon which scenes of violence ensued, and bloodshed was only prevented by the interference of the English Bishop. The Bishop himself wrote to the King, informing him that he had repeatedly begged the assistance of the English Consul in trying to secure the rights of the Abyssinians, but that the Consul had declared such a measure impossible, as he had not received any instructions from his Government to protect the Abyssinians. This surprised and irri-

tated the King the more, as Mr. Finn, the former English Consul, had previously assured him that he was commissioned by his Government to protect the Abyssinians”*.

In order to understand this statement, it is necessary to refer to what has already been recorded† respecting this subject, and also to cite what Earl Russell has stated in his despatch to Colonel Stanton of October 5th, 1865. When commenting on Lord Malmesbury’s answer to Bishop Gobat’s application, Lord Russell expresses himself in the following singular terms:—“You will see that the Earl of Malmesbury distinctly refused ‘to protect officially the natives of Abyssinia who may chance to be residing in the territory of the Sublime Porte.’ You will observe also that the good offices to be employed in their favour were intended for the benefit of those ‘who might chance to be residing in the territory of the Sublime Porte.’ Thus a distinction was made between those who might resort occasionally or casually to Jerusalem and the inhabitants of Jerusalem of Abyssinian origin, who might be accounted Turkish subjects.” This is, however, a distinction without a difference. The Abyssinians at Jerusalem are all of one class, and they are *all* either Turkish subjects or they are not.

His Lordship continues:—“Thus limited, both as to the extent of the protection to be afforded and as to the classes of persons on whose behalf good offices were to be exercised, the instructions of the Earl of Malmesbury must be allowed to have been proper and judicious. Accordingly (continues his Lordship) I referred Consul

* ‘Record’ of September 6th, 1865; and see also the ‘Times,’ of Sept. 14th.

† See pages 73-76.

Finn, on May 29th, 1862, to those instructions of 1852, observing, 'I have nothing to add to those instructions, except to enjoin you to act upon them with caution and prudence.'" And his Lordship concludes this portion of his despatch with the words, "Those instructions remain still in force."

But Earl Russell omitted to add that on October 30th, 1862, Consul Finn was removed from Jerusalem and sent to the Dardanelles, and Mr. Noel Moore was appointed Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem in his stead. What the consequences were of this substitution of Mr. Moore for Mr. Finn have yet to be seen.

In a letter published in the 'Times' of September 14th, 1865, in which was given similar information to that reported by Mr. Steiger, I stated on good authority that *Mr. Moore, the new Consul, had expressed his inability to help the Abyssinians, on the ground of their being Turkish subjects.*

I added, and it is most important to repeat it here, that the poor Abyssinians being thus abandoned to the tender mercies of the Turks, the head of the convent was arbitrarily thrust into prison—not into the usual place of confinement, but illegally into a dungeon in the Armenian convent, where he was kept upon bread and water. This lasted for many weeks, until, through European aid—in which it is only justice to Consul Moore to say that he had no hand—the poor man managed to escape disguised in European clothes, and found his way to his native country, arriving there at a moment when this intelligence alone was wanting to fill the cup of the indignant monarch's wrath to overflowing.

The other Abyssinian residents, when their church and convent had been wrested from them, left Jerusalem in a body. Deprived of all their nation holds most dear, and deserted by the British Consul, in whose predecessor they had always found a friend, they addressed a memorial on the subject of their wrongs to "the Most Noble Church in London," which the Archbishop of Canterbury laid before Convocation in the season of 1864, at the same time communicating the reply he had received from Earl Russell, to whom His Grace had submitted the same. That reply was to the effect that a letter had been sent to the Emperor of Abyssinia, and it was hoped in consequence that the persecution would be stopped*.

It is not very intelligible how a Turkish persecution of the Christian Abyssinians at Jerusalem in the year 1863 could be stopped by means of a letter written to their sovereign at Gondar, especially when that letter was not delivered till January 28th, 1866; and it can only be imagined there is some mistake in what is thus stated. At all events the position of the Abyssinians is not at all bettered, and they are as far as ever from obtaining the restitution of their church and convent. *

How the Emperor Theodore understood and regarded this conduct, says Mr. Steiger, "was soon visible in his behaviour to Captain Cameron *and to those of us who were connected with English societies.* We were bound with chains, our goods confiscated, our houses in Djenda and Darna demolished, and *the only reason assigned was our connexion with the English Consul and English societies.*"

* See the 'Times' of June 23rd, 1864.

Is anything further necessary to establish the fact that the ill-treatment of the unhappy missionaries of the London Society was a mere episode incidental to the main question, which was entirely between the Emperor Theodore and the British Government?

But there is another question arising out of that of the Abyssinian church and convent at Jerusalem, the solution of which may be yet more difficult than any other. In my letter of September 14th, 1865, I stated, and it has just been repeated, that Consul Moore, when applied to by the Abyssinians, expressed his inability to protect them, on the ground of their being Turkish subjects. Now, it has to be inquired whether in saying this Mr. Moore expressed the sentiments of the British Government. If so, our relations with Abyssinia, past, present, and future, reveal themselves in a light which, if not altogether new, is one in which they have never before been exhibited.

It is a well-established fact, though it may not be generally known, that the Ottoman Porte includes the whole of the Christian country of Abyssinia within its dominions. The Governor-General of Yemen, on his investiture, is named Pasha of Habesh among his other titles; he, either directly or indirectly, delegates his authority over this province of the Turkish empire to the governor of Massowah; and inasmuch as this latter, as Consul Plowden informs us, "must give some account of the twenty provinces supposed to be submitted to his authority, every few months he procures the signature of a number of people in Massowah to a paper setting forth that perfect order and tranquillity reign everywhere in the Sultan's extensive possessions in this part of the world.

In a manner hitherto believed to be peculiarly Chinese, this despatch is always sent when the neighbourhood is most disturbed, and when marked disorders have occurred in the town”*.

As long as this continued to be the same mere form that it had been for three centuries past, England made no scruple in treating Abyssinia as a State, or collection of States, totally independent of Turkey; and hence she sent missions to that country, and entered into treaties with the rulers of it, or parts of it, in 1810, in 1841, and in 1849; and whilst Massowah remained in the hands of a governor appointed, directly or indirectly, from Constantinople, this might have gone on unquestioned in any quarter.

But during the last few years a very important change has been in course of preparation, and in 1865 is understood to have been operated, though it was not acted on till the beginning of the present year. This change is no less than the transfer of the whole of the Turkish dominions along the western shores of the Red Sea from the Ottoman Porte to its powerful vassal, the Viceroy of Egypt. This cession is understood to have been made under a fixed rent, and for the term only of the life of the present Viceroy; but it can hardly be anticipated that, after Egypt has been put into possession of a country so important to her on account of its lying between the sea and the extensive and valuable regions of Soudan in the interior of Africa, and has acted in virtue of that possession, she will ever again be willing to relinquish it.

Be this as it may, the occupation of those frontiers of

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, ‘Further Correspondence,’ &c., p. 43.

Abyssinia which lie nearest to Massowah and the coast has not been delayed one moment on the part of Egypt. Towards the end of April of the present year Massowah was formally transferred from Turkey to Egypt, and, as I witnessed in person, a garrison of 800 men was placed in the island and on the mainland adjoining; and since I left Abyssinia, I have heard that large bodies of troops were being assembled along the northern frontiers of Abyssinia, for the purpose of taking possession of some portion, at least, of the twenty provinces now submitted to the authority of living and energetic Egypt in the place of effete and dying Turkey. Ere this, I have little doubt, Bogos has been "annexed."

This transfer is generally understood to have been effectuated mainly through the instrumentality of Sir Henry Bulwer, late British Ambassador at Constantinople; and its object is said to be the more effectual prevention of the French from obtaining a footing anywhere along the east coast of Africa within the Red Sea; as they have already managed to secure one at Obokh, just outside the Straits of Babelmandeb*.

If this really be the case—without at all touching the question of the policy or impolicy of the measure—we shall be better able to understand a number of facts which, regarded singly and independently, have not been very intelligible. In the first place, there are the lengthened negotiations with the Emperor Theodore for a treaty and an embassy to be sent by him through Egypt. Now, if Abyssinia is to be regarded as a dependency of Turkey or Egypt, England could no more receive an Ambassador

* See page 63.

from her "Emperor," than she could in 1862 welcome Said Pasha as an independent Sovereign. Secondly, England might, as she did in Consul Finn's time, tender her good offices on behalf of the oppressed Abyssinians at Jerusalem; but, if Turkey insisted on her "rights," she would be unable to *protect* them, or obtain for them the restoration of their church and convent, on the ground of their being Turkish subjects. Thirdly, our Consul's interference on behalf of the injured Christians of Bogos, which in 1854 was a commendable act, would in 1863 have become an unwarrantable act of impertinence, drawing down on the offender's head the displeasure of his own Government, and even his absolute dismissal had the Government of Egypt insisted on it. And, lastly, the fact that the British Consulate in Abyssinia is no longer a separate one, but has been made subordinate to the Consulate General in Egypt, would only be a proof of our intention to regard Abyssinia no longer as an independent State. Under this view, Earl Russell's declaration in his memorable despatch to Consul-General Stanton receives a significance which it might not otherwise possess:—"It has seemed to the British Government a preferable course to withdraw, as much as possible, from Abyssinian engagements, Abyssinian alliances, and British interference in Abyssinia" *.

Earl Russell proceeds to say:—"This course, however, has not been taken without giving rise to groundless reproaches, many unfounded allegations, and some embarrassing and painful occurrences. Of the former class is

* Parl. Papers, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 62.

the following bold assertion, namely, ‘There is reason for believing that the Emperor Theodore holds Captain Cameron as a hostage for the recognition by England, already made in 1849, of the independence of Abyssinia, for the suppression of Egyptian aggressions along the frontier, and for the restitution of the church and convent at Jerusalem, torn from him and his people by the Copts, Armenians, and Turks.’”

When the further Papers connected with “The Abyssinian Question,” which will have to be laid before Parliament, are produced, I much fear that the boldness of this assertion will be found to consist in its truth.

Resuming the narrative of events, it has next to be stated that on February 3rd, 1864, M. Bardel, who, since the trial of the missionaries in the previous November, had been absent from Gondar, returned to that city. He had been sent by the Emperor to Kassala with a party of horsemen, to inquire into the particulars of M. de Bisson’s expedition*, and likewise apparently to ascertain how far Consul Cameron might have been implicated in that undertaking and in the other hostile movements along the frontiers†; and he had subsequently gone away secretly to Khartum, under the pretence that he had escaped from the Emperor’s clutches, but in reality as his spy. As soon as M. Bardel had made his report, the Emperor ordered his European workmen to come from Gaffat to attend a special council. This they did on February 5th; and after a lengthened conference they were sent to liberate Messrs. Flad, Steiger, Brandeis, Cornelius (since

* See page 120.

† See page 94.

dead), Essler, and Schiller*. The only prisoners left in chains were the British Consul and his attendants, and the two London missionaries, Stern and Rosenthal. There was a talk of their being liberated likewise, if the Consul would pledge himself that the British Government would not insist on satisfaction for all that had occurred.

A few days afterwards † M. Bardel, who since his return from his secret mission had been taken into high favour, and is understood to have presumed too much on it, was brought to the tent in which the English prisoners remained in chains, and added to their number—his offence being, as was publicly stated by the head jailer, that he had misrepresented the prisoners to the Emperor, and caused him to chain them, that he had himself also spoken ill of the Emperor, and that he had further, by unfounded assertions, tried to prejudice him against the European workmen ‡ at Gaffat; which last grievance the Emperor doubtless took to heart far more than the others, on account of his great regard for them.

On the 14th of February all the artisans were ordered to return to Gaffat, and the missionaries and others libe-

* These last two are not missionaries. Mr. Layard styles them "natural-history collectors," Mr. Stern "ornithologists." Cornelius was a colporteur of Mr. Stern's in Constantinople, and went out with him to Abyssinia in 1860 in the same capacity.

† Mr. Stern says, on February 4th; but this must be an oversight.

‡ They prefer to call themselves "Scripture readers." See Mr. Waldmeier's letter to Bishop Gobat, dated Koráta, March 20, 1866, published in the 'Record' of July 11, 1866. But they are generally styled by others "artisan or lay missionaries," or "European workmen."

rated a few days previously were sent to work with them. On the same day Consul Cameron managed to write and dispatch to Massowah the following note in pencil :—

“ *Gondar, February 14, 1864.*

“ Myself, Stern, Rosenthal, Kerans, Bardel, and M'Kilvie are all in chains here. Flad, Steiger, Brandeis, and Cornelius sent to Gaffat to work for the King. No release till a civil answer to King's letter arrives. Mrs. Flad, Mrs. Rosenthal and children, all of us well. Write this to Aden, and to Mrs. Stern, 16 Lincoln's Inn Fields.

“ *To C. Speedy, Esq., Massowah.*”

From that time till May 12th the prisoners all remained in chains, with the exception of Mr. Rosenthal, whose shackles were taken off for a while because he had interpreted a text of Scripture to the satisfaction of the despotic and capricious Monarch—the monotony of their confinement being occasionally relieved by discussions on religious subjects (especially fasting), in which the Emperor and his court appear to have sometimes taken part.

On the 12th of May—“ a day which like one or two more will never be obliterated from my memory,” writes poor Stern—a violent dispute took place between the Emperor and the Abúna. This dispute appears to have arisen, in part at least, out of certain money matters ; but the subject is not at all clear, and I can only refer to what Mr. Stern has written about it in his letter printed in the Appendix. But it may not be immaterial to direct attention here to the statement of Mr. Stern on a previous occasion, that Samuel had said to him, “ the Negús has heard your replies, and did he deem it expedient *he could tell you a secret about England.* But

what does it matter? time will reveal it." Whether this has any bearing on the present question, I cannot pretend to say; but it is certain that there were money transactions with the mercenary Abúna which would not exactly bear the light.

Nothing occurred immediately after this dispute and the interrogations that ensued on it. But about sunset—a most perilous time of day to have anything to do with Theodore—the Emperor came galloping over the plain to where the prisoners were; and a scene of horror ensued which no one would venture to describe after the affecting narrative, from the pens of two of the chief sufferers, given in the Appendix.

When the torture of the wretched prisoners was at length put a stop to, and they were left to themselves, infidelity, scepticism (which had frequently formed the staple of their discussions), sneers, and scoffs were now all merged in one deep and pathetic cry of anguish, fear, and despair; and in compliance with the request of some of his fellow sufferers, Mr. Stern, whose words I am here only repeating, poured forth the gushing emotions of his heart in a prayer in which sorrow, sighing, trust, and confidence were sadly blended.

In the midst of all this anguish and misery, there was yet the consolation, to the persecuted missionaries at least, that all they were enduring was not in vain, as the following touching incident will testify.

Among the captives, though his name does not appear in Consul Cameron's note, is a Frenchman named Makerer. This person is a native of Alsace, of middle age, who has served in the army of Algiers, and went out

to Abyssinia in the service of our Consul. Makerer, like most of his countrymen, was born in the Roman Catholic faith, but appears never to have troubled himself much about religion, except to become a confirmed infidel and scoffer. His reckless profanity was such as frequently to call forth a protest and a rebuke from Mrs. Flad, who, as well as her husband, also addressed to him occasional words of admonition and warning. For a long while all this was without any visible effect; but subsequently to the removal of the captives to the Emperor's camp, Makerer was observed to attend occasionally the morning and evening services which the missionaries regularly held in their tent. After this had gone on for some time, the soldier asked Mr. Flad to lend him a copy of the New Testament, which he sedulously perused, becoming at the same time a constant attendant at divine service. On the departure of the captives for Amba Magdala, as will be mentioned in the next page, Makerer was especially recommended to the care of Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal by Mr. Flad, who himself kept up a correspondence with the convert, and sent him from time to time religious books and tracts. They had remained some considerable time in the fortress, when Makerer, who had continued his study of the Scriptures with increased diligence, begged of Mr. Stern a copy of the Bible in Amharic. This he studied so attentively and unremittingly, that in an almost incredibly short time he became able to read and explain it to the native soldiers who kept guard over him and the other prisoners; and Mr. Flad, from whom this little anecdote has been obtained, expresses his firm conviction that the

former profane swearer and reprobate has now become a repentant and consistent Christian, and may, with God's blessing, turn out to be a messenger for good to the ignorant and superstitious people among whom his lot has been cast.

Returning to the suffering missionaries, it has to be related that on the night of May the 13th the torture was repeated. But it is useless to dwell on these atrocities, the particulars of which are given in the distressing narratives of Mr. Stern and Mr. Rosenthal. What they underwent passes all conception, and the only wonder is that they should have survived it all, especially when coupled with the great hardships and privations of every kind to which they were subjected during their lengthened incarceration.

The incessant tropical rains of 1864 were passed by the wretched captives in an old ragged tent; but as soon as the season for campaigning approached, the Emperor, before leaving Begamider for Godjam to attack the indomitable Tádela Gwalu, had them removed to Amba Magdala. To reach that fortress, which was destined to be their prison for so many months, they were dragged two and two, chained together, across the country on mules, every moment in danger of pulling one another off their animals and breaking their necks; and on arriving there they were huddled together with about two hundred persons of various ranks, ages, and sexes, charged with real or supposed crimes and variously chained, and crammed into a place about sixty feet in diameter.

Magdala is an *amba* or hill-fort in Warrahémano, the principal division of the country of the Mohammedan

Wollo Gallas, who for the last few centuries have occupied the central and finest portion of Abyssinia. Its position is very incorrectly marked in the few maps in which its name appears at all; and though it cannot be absolutely determined, yet, from unpublished documents in my possession, I believe I am not far wrong in placing it in lat. 11° 30' N. and long. 39° 10' E. of Greenwich. Magdala is almost impregnable by nature, and since its acquisition by the Emperor Theodore it has been rendered completely so, it having been made by him his chief fortress, arsenal, and state prison; and he is now connecting it with Debra Tabor, the former capital of Ras Ali, by means of a military road, constructed by his European workmen, over the lofty pass of *Nefás Máwatja* (the "Portal of the Winds") at an elevation of between 10,000 and 11,000 feet above the ocean.

It may not be out of place to mention here that on this road, about halfway between Debra Tabor and Magdala, the Emperor has recently founded a new camp or capital* at Zebit, in an extensive plain known as Zebit Myéda, at a short distance to the east of the mountain-range of *Nefás Máwatja*. In the beginning of the present year Zebit was taken possession of by Waagshum Góbazyé, who remained there some time, placing the surrounding districts under contribution. Thinking to surprise his enemy, whose army was but small, Théodore performed one of his forced marches by night, for which he has become more famous than the celebrated Galla Chief Amora Fasil ("Basil the Eagle") of the time of the

* Like the Roman *Castrum*, the Abyssinian *Kátama* has this double meaning. The camp, made permanent, becomes a town.

traveller Bruce. But Góbazyé, having through his spies had warning of Theodore's approach, made a rapid retreat, first burning the Emperor's new capital to the ground.

The following description of the place of confinement of the illfated victims of Theodore's anger is given by Mr. Stern in a letter to his wife:—"As I am reminded of the approach of winter, I will give you a hasty sketch of the place where we and upwards of two hundred unhappy natives of all ranks and conditions may have to pass the ensuing inclement season of winter. Just picture to your imagination an isolated locality arising out of the midst of a jumble of conical hills, deep ravines, and serrated ridges, and you have Amba Magdala. On the summit there are clusters of thatched huts, occupied by about 1000 troops. Not far from the church, which you recognize by an apex surmounted by a glittering cross, you gaze on a mass of wretched hovels that stand in mocking contrast around four spacious circular dwellings; you approach a few steps nearer, and you behold a strong thorn fence guarded by groups of sooty soldiers, close to whom lie basking in the sun bands of unfortunates loaded with galling fetters. This is the royal prison.

"Those wretched huts outside the enclosure are occupied by the *élite* of the prisoners during the day; but towards evening all must repair within the fence, where, after being counted, they are driven like wild beasts within the reeking walls of those conically shaped structures. Insects, and all that is repulsive of whatever name or colour, swarm in these jails; and really, if Providence had not temperéd human nature so as to

render it capable of enduring every hardship, I believe even few Abyssinians would long resist the fatal influence of this poisonous atmosphere. By special favour we are allowed to make our abode close to the walls of one of these houses; and there, under a black woollen awning, Captain Cameron, Rosenthal, Makerer, and myself pass the day and night, and the rest, who have huts outside, only the night."

Until the 1st of July, 1865, the prisoners' feet alone were fettered; but on that day the heir to the throne of Shoa having unexpectedly quitted the Emperor's camp, the enraged monarch vented his spite on his prisoners, both native and European. All the Mohammedan Gallas had their hands and feet hacked off, and their mutilated bodies were then hurled down the precipitous side of the amba. The Christian prisoners had hand-chains added to those already round their ankles, the two being so fastened together that the wearers were bent double, and thus rendered unable to move about by day or to stretch their weary limbs by night.

In this wretched state of torture they continued till the 25th of February, 1866, when the joyful news reached them of the arrival of Mr. Rassam at the Emperor's camp, and the order in consequence given for their liberation.

This news was communicated to me by Captain Cameron in the following letter, which reached me at Halai on the 4th of April:—

“ Magdala Prison, February 26th, 1866.

“ MY DEAR BEKE,—I saw in a fragment of the ‘Times’ yesterday that you had volunteered to come to this country to try and effect our liberation.

“ I thank you most sincerely, and beg that you will be good enough to inform such of our well-wishers as may be within your reach that our chains were taken off yesterday, and that we are all to be given over to Mr. Rassam. I write this in secret and in haste, but will let you know further hereafter how we are getting on. God bless you; and with kind regards to Mrs. Beke, believe me,

“ Yours sincerely,

“ C. DUNCAN CAMERON.”

The gratifying intelligence of the release of the captives reached England on April 23rd, in a despatch from Colonel Merewether, Resident at Aden, to the Earl of Clarendon, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which was read by his Lordship in the House of Lords in the evening of the same day, and on the following morning appeared in all the newspapers.

From this point the history of the captivity coincides with that of the measures adopted for the liberation of the prisoners. It is therefore here the place to take up the narrative of those measures from the commencement. This will be done in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST NEWS OF CONSUL'S DETENTION—NOT BELIEVED—IMPRISONMENT OF MISSIONARIES—MRS. STERN'S PETITION—THE QUEEN ADVISED NOT TO WRITE TO THEODORE—LONDON SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE JEWS—THEIR INACTION—REASONS FOR IT—GREAT MISTAKE—MISSIONARIES MIGHT HAVE BEEN FREED—ANNIVERSARY MEETING—SILENCE RECOMMENDED—MR. LAYARD'S REASONS FOR NOT ANSWERING THEODORE'S LETTER—CONSUL CAMERON'S NOTE—QUEEN'S LETTER TO THEODORE—ENTRUSTED TO MR. BASSAM—OBJECTIONS TO HIM—TESTIMONIALS OF MR. LAYARD AND SIR WILLIAM COGHLAN—INSTRUCTIONS TO DEMAND CONSUL'S RELEASE ONLY—INJUSTICE TO MISSIONARIES—PRIVATE CHARGE TO EXONERATE GOVERNMENT—MR. BASSAM ARRIVES AT MASSOWAH—ANNOUNCES QUEEN'S LETTER AND ASKS FOR ESCORT—THE EMPEROR'S ANGER—REFUSES TO NOTICE HIM—SPIES SENT—QUEEN'S LETTER CHANGED—MISSION ENLARGED—PRESENT OF FIREARMS—MR. BASSAM REMAINS UNNOTICED.

The first intelligence of Captain Cameron's disgrace and detention, if not actual imprisonment, in July 1863, as narrated in a previous page *, reached Europe in this form, as given in the 'Standard' newspaper of December 15th †:—
 "The Paris papers of this evening publish advices from Egypt, announcing the victory of the Emperor Theodore of Abyssinia over the population of Godjam. The Emperor is reported to have ordered the massacre of 15,000 prisoners, men, women, and children. He is also stated to have had the English Consul at Massowah arrested, and to have set the French Consul at liberty."

* Page 93.

† Copied from the evening edition of the 'Patrie' of December 14-15.

It is highly deserving of notice that Captain Cameron's arrest was thus publicly announced in France and in England, as long ago as December 15th, 1863. No one at the time paid any attention to it; for nobody could believe it, the favour in which the British Consul had stood being a matter of such notoriety.

It would appear, however, from a few words dropped by the Earl of Clarendon in the debate in the House of Lords on February 9th, 1866, that the news had reached the Foreign Office at that early date. His Lordship's words were, "The first we heard, *not of the imprisonment, but the detention of Consul Cameron*, came by rumour through Egypt"* . But whatever may have been known at headquarters was not divulged; and it was not till March 16th, 1864, exactly three months afterwards, that the London Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews received the distressing intelligence respecting their missionaries, which had been brought from Abyssinia to Khartúm by Mr. Hausmann, an agent of the Basle Society, who had been allowed to leave the country. On communicating these tidings to the Foreign Office, the London Society learned that Her Majesty's Government had already received similar intelligence †, and that orders had been sent to the Consul-General in Egypt "to open up communications with Abyssinia" ‡. What measures were adopted by the Consul-General in con-

* 'Times,' February 10, 1866.

† Intelligence of Captain Cameron's captivity had reached me several days previously, and I wrote to Viscount Palmerston and Earl Russell on the 15th and 18th of March, offering my services to effect his liberation and that of the other captives.

‡ See 'Jewish Intelligence' for May 1st, 1864.

sequence of these instructions have not, however, been made public.

At the Anniversary Meeting of the London Society, held in Exeter Hall on May 6th of that year, the President, Lord Shaftesbury, stated that, "with a view to the liberation of Mr. Stern, he had transmitted to Lord Russell a letter from Mrs. Stern, addressed to the Queen, praying (and his Lordship added that he had joined in the prayer to Lord Russell) that Her Majesty might be induced, by letter under the sign manual, written by the Queen herself, to intercede with the King of Abyssinia to have mercy on him" *.

However, on the following day (May 7th), Earl Russell wrote to Lord Shaftesbury, saying that "after much consideration he had come to the conclusion that *he ought not to advise the Queen to write to the King of Abyssinia*; but he gave the assurance that every possible means should be used to obtain the release of Mr. Stern and his fellow-prisoners" †. Mrs. Stern's petition to the Queen was accordingly returned by Earl Russell unrepresented.

Allusion having thus been made to the London Society, whose missionaries Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal are, it is here the fitting place to mention that all active measures on the part of that Society for the liberation of their missionaries ceased with the transmission, by the Earl of Shaftesbury to Earl Russell, of Mrs. Stern's petition to the Queen.

That the Society generally, and their executive officers individually, have felt, and still continue to feel, deeply

* See the 'Record' of May 9th, 1864.

† See 'Jewish Intelligence' for December 1st, 1865, p. 296.

interested in the issue of the proceedings cannot for one moment be doubted; and that the latter, in the name of the Society, have made repeated applications at the Foreign Office for information is also certain. But it is not less certain that all separate exertions for the liberation of their own missionaries have been not merely suspended, but discountenanced, their course of action being controlled by the determination that, "*the conduct of the Emperor being based upon political considerations, with which our Government only could deal, they ought not to interfere by any independent action, so long as the Government were making any reasonable efforts to accomplish the liberation of the captives*"*. The result of this determination, which was reiterated and confirmed, after much deliberation, by a resolution of the General Committee at a Special Meeting on November 3rd, 1865 †, was, in effect, to abandon their missionaries to the Government, through whose fault (as is virtually admitted) they had been placed in so dreadful a position, and to their agent, Mr. Rassam, an object of whose mission was (as will be clearly shown in the sequel) to exonerate that Government at all risks—even at the expense of the unfortunate missionaries themselves—quite as much as it was to accomplish their liberation.

I would not for a moment think of harbouring a doubt as to the conviction of all parties concerned that the course they adopted was the right one. But it was a most mistaken one, nevertheless. It has, I apprehend, been convincingly established ‡ that the Emperor Theo-

* 'Jewish Intelligence,' December 1, 1865, p. 294.

† *Ibid.* p. 299.

‡ See page 113.

dore had originally no special motive for visiting the missionaries—even Mr. Stern—with the consequences of his extreme displeasure; it has likewise been shown * that, on more than one occasion, he was prepared to forgive them. It appears further, from the statement of Mr. Waldmeier, one of Bishop Gobat's lay missionaries, published in the 'Record' of July 1st, 1866, that the petition sent by me from Massowah from the relatives of the captives "deeply moved the heart of the Emperor," that portion of it from Mr. Stern's family being "written in very good terms, and exceedingly touching" †; and I have been assured that, had Captain Cameron's name been left out and the petition limited to the families of all the captives except his own, its prayer would have been granted and all the other captives sent away at once. For the Emperor is conscious, as everybody else now is, that the quarrel was and still is solely between him and the British Government; and the representative of that Government is even now detained a prisoner until satisfaction is obtained for his grievances. Such, indeed, is the meaning of his words to Mr. Rassam in July 1866, when making him and the members of his suite prisoners with the rest, and sending them in charge of M. Bardel to Amba Magdala:—"You are a sweet-mouthed gentleman, Mr. Rassam; but *those above you are my enemies.*"

It can therefore hardly be doubted that independent action on the part of the Society would long ago

* See pages 114, 128 and 138: see also the Appendix.

† Mr. Waldmeier speaks of several petitions; but there was one only from the relatives of all the captives jointly and severally. It was accompanied by a letter from myself individually. Both petition and letter, with the Emperor's answer, are given in the Appendix.

have saved their missionaries; though at the same time its success would have too plainly shown to the world where the real fault lay.

So great, however, has been the scrupulousness of the Committee of the London Society and their Noble President, that not only have they refrained from all independent action, but they have even deprecated every expression of individual feeling or opinion on the subject. Hence it is that, at the last Anniversary Meeting of the Society in Exeter Hall, on May 3rd, 1866, Lord Shaftesbury said, "I hope that in the course of the discussions of this day nothing will be said in reference to that great African potentate, the Emperor of Abyssinia. *A hasty word incautiously spoken was the cause, as I believe, of all the troubles that were subsequently brought upon the missionaries; and therefore I trust that nothing will now be said on that subject. Strange as it may appear, it shows what is called the growing civilization of the world, that the remote Emperor of Abyssinia has as many agents in this country to pick up and to give him information as the Emperor of Austria or the Emperor of Russia; and therefore our language should be discreet, and our words wary and few*"*.

At the time when these words were uttered by the noble President, whom I would not do the injustice to regard as anything but the mouthpiece of others, news had just been received that the captives were released from their chains, and were expected to start shortly on their journey homewards; and the Meeting was accordingly called on to express its gratitude to Earl Russell and "the

* 'Jewish Intelligence,' June 1, 1866, p. 122.

(late) Government of this country for the *very prompt* measures which they took for the release of the poor sufferers."

The sentiments thus expressed as lately as May 3rd, 1866, might almost be regarded as ironical; because it is certain, from the explicit declaration of Earl Russell to the Earl of Shaftesbury on May 7th, 1864*—just two years before—that Her Majesty's Government had no intention to give a "prompt" or any other reply to the Emperor's letter, and that, had they not been forced to do so, they would never have noticed it. It is with this certainty, however, that we now find Mr. Layard's statement in the House of Commons, on June 30th, 1865, to be much nearer the *literal* truth than most persons were inclined to believe it to be at the time it was made. His words were, "A great deal has been said as to no answer having been sent to the letter to the Queen †. I will ask any impartial person—knowing that that letter originated after a distinct understanding with the King that Her Majesty's Government would not receive a mission until he had given up all idea of conquest upon Turkey,—after rejecting a treaty which authorized him to send a mission to England,—whether any person would have thought it necessary to answer that letter at all? I can only say that *even now, after what has passed*, if the letter were put into my hands, I should say it did not require an answer. The first letter of the King had been answered ‡; and we did not wish that Consul Cameron should come home on a mission.

* See page 149.

† The letter is given in page 78.

‡ Earl Russell's answer will be found in page 67.

Having no wish to answer that letter, we sent it to the India Office, to know whether they wished to answer it. Not a bit of it; they did not think it necessary that a mission should be sent to this country, the object of which was to get us to go to war with Turkey”*.

Nevertheless, a few days only after Earl Russell had informed the Earl of Shaftesbury that he had advised Her Majesty *not* to write to the Emperor Theodore—namely, on May 25th, 1864,—the note from Consul Cameron of February 14th of that year, given in page 138, reached London, was inserted in all the newspapers, and filled everybody with amazement—the officials at the Foreign and India Offices, if I am rightly informed, quite as much as others. Of course an investigation was instantly set on foot: the Emperor’s letter, which had been altogether lost sight of, if not actually mislaid, was looked up; and on the 3rd of the following month (June), in answer to the inquiry of Mr. Henry D. Seymour in the House of Commons, Mr. Layard said that “Her Majesty’s Government would of course do all they possibly could to obtain the release of Captain Cameron and the missionaries. The most natural step would be to send some person there to demand their release; but Her Majesty’s Government were rather afraid that he would share the same fate as the Consul and the missionaries. The question was how to get at the King, without endangering the liberty of others. He trusted, however, that means would soon be found of communicating with the King, and the subject was under the serious consideration of the noble Lord at the head of the Foreign Office”†.

* ‘Times,’ July 1, 1865.

† ‘Standard,’ June 4, 1864.

The promised serious consideration having been given to the subject, it was decided that the previous determination of both the Foreign and the India Office should be rescinded, and that after all the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs *ought* to advise Her Majesty to write a civil answer to the Emperor's letter of October 31st, 1862, which had remained unnoticed for more than fifteen months since its receipt by Her Majesty's Government. Accordingly, towards the end of June 1864, a reply from the Queen, under the Sign Manual, was addressed to His Majesty, and letters were also procured from the Coptic Patriarch at Cairo, both to that monarch and to the Abúna.

The Queen's letter was sent out to Egypt to have an Arabic translation made to accompany it, but was thence sent back to England to receive certain modifications suggested by (or to) the Consul-General there. This caused some delay; but at length the letter with its translation, and those from the Coptic Patriarch, were transmitted to Aden for delivery to the Emperor Theodore.

The duty of delivering these letters was entrusted to Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, who is well known from his connexion with Mr. Layard at Nineveh, and who for several years past has been an Assistant to the Political Resident at Aden.

As serious objections have been made on various occasions, both in and out of Parliament, to the choice of Mr. Rassam to be the bearer of the Queen's letter, and to negotiate for the liberation of the British Consul and the other European captives, it is only just to him to

state the precise relation in which he stood to Mr. Layard, and also to reproduce the testimonial in his favour given by Sir William Coghlan.

As regards the former, Mr. Layard makes the following statement in his well-known work :—“ Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, the brother of the British Vice-Consul, came to reside with me, and undertook the daily payment of the workmen and the domestic arrangements ”*.

Sir William Coghlan's testimonial, as read by Mr. Layard in the House of Commons during the debate on June 30th, 1865, when nearly a twelvemonth had elapsed without any good having resulted from Mr. Rassam's mission, was in the following terms :—“ Mr. Rassam's antecedents, his *status*, and his qualifications are greatly misunderstood and misrepresented by a portion of the press of this country. He has been variously styled Levantine, Greek, obscure Armenian, Turkish subject, nondescript, &c. In answer to these assertions it is but just to a very deserving public servant to say what Mr. Rassam really is. He was born at Mosul, of Christian parents (his brother is British Vice-Consul there); he received his education in England; he is a gentleman in manners and conduct; and his qualifications for the peculiar line in which he has been employed during the last ten years cannot be surpassed. I speak with confidence on this point; for Mr. Rassam was my assistant at Aden during many years of trouble; a part of that time he held charge of our political relations at Muscat, and acquitted himself to the entire approval of the Government which placed him there. In short, Mr. Rassam's whole previous

* ‘Nineveh,’ vol. i. p. 54.

career well justified the expectation which Her Majesty's Government entertained in appointing him to the delicate and difficult mission on which he is now employed. The disappointment of that expectation is not attributable to any fault of his" *.

The instructions from Earl Russell to Mr. Rassam were to the effect that he should *demand the release of Consul Cameron*; but, inasmuch as Her Majesty's Government had no right to make authoritative demands on foreign powers in favour of any not British subjects, *Mr. Rassam was cautioned against making his request on behalf of foreigners in an authoritative manner*, such as he would be entitled to do on behalf of subjects of Her Majesty. Of course Mr. Rassam was commissioned to do his best to obtain, if practicable, the liberation of all the captives; but it is manifest, from his instructions, that he was to *insist* on the liberation of Consul Cameron alone—that is to say, of the individual who, as the representative of the British Government, was the only person really to blame, and against whom, in that capacity though not personally, the Emperor had therefore the greatest cause of complaint; whilst the poor missionaries, Stern and Rosenthal, *who were the victims of an arbitrary domiciliary visit, which would never have been made but for the fault of the British Government*, were to be left in the lurch, if needs must be—because, forsooth, Her Majesty's Government have no right to make authoritative demands in favour of any but British subjects †, even when they may happen

* 'Times,' July 1, 1865.

† Mr. Stern is the bearer of a Foreign Office passport, in which he is designated "a British subject." It was obtained for him through a

to be in difficulties through the fault, not of themselves, but of that Government. What then becomes of the repeated "assurance on the part of Her Majesty's Government that they would do all in their power to obtain the release of the missionaries *in common with Her Majesty's Consul*," on which the Committee of the London Society implicitly and confidently relied as a justification for their not adopting or promoting any separate action to save their own missionaries*?

In addition to the execution of his official instructions, Mr. Rassam had a duty to perform of a private and more delicate character, to which allusion has been made in a previous page †. He was to make a good case for the British Government—to remove the blame from their shoulders, even if it were thrown on those of any one else. It did not matter who might be the scapegoat, as long as the Government were exonerated. This is said quite advisedly; and when the results of Mr. Rassam's mission come to be investigated, its truth will be seen and acknowledged by all, even the most sceptical.

Having received his credentials, Mr. Rassam, accompanied by a medical officer, proceeded to Massowah, at which island he arrived on the 20th of August, 1864. From Massowah he dispatched messengers to the Court of the Emperor, with the letters from the Coptic Patriarch;

banker by a relative of his wife, himself a British subject, who, in perfect good faith, stated the connexion between them, without any thought of the difference of nationality. Still, with such a passport, Mr. Stern has surely a right to the protection of our Government.

* See 'Jewish Intelligence,' December 1, 1865, p. 298.

† See page 150.

and he himself addressed a letter to His Majesty, stating that he was the bearer of the Queen of England's answer to the Abyssinian Monarch's letter of October 31st, 1862, which he was prepared to bring up on a suitable escort being sent for him, but representing to His Majesty the propriety of the previous liberation of Her Britannic Majesty's Consul.

The Emperor, indignant at such a demand being addressed to him from the coast, instead of the Queen's "messenger" coming up to present Her Majesty's letter in person, refused to send him an answer: did not even condescend to notice him!

Nevertheless, shortly after the news of Mr. Rassam's arrival had reached the Court, two Abyssinians came down to Massowah and visited that gentleman, doing so as if it were out of curiosity and as mere strangers; but, after a civil reception from him, these visitors vanished all at once, leaving no trace behind. They were evidently "spies, come to see the nakedness of the land"—emissaries of the Emperor, sent to take note of him and his mission, and to report thereon, which they would hardly have been able to do in a manner satisfactory to their arrogant Sovereign.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to say what actually took place in the twelvemonth that elapsed between the 20th of August, 1864, when Mr. Rassam arrived at Massowah, and the same date of the following year. From time to time reports, both favourable and unfavourable, appeared in the newspapers; but nothing certain was known; and it would be to no good purpose to speculate as to the details, when it is sufficient to know the general

result to have been, that no actual advance was made towards the liberation of the captives, or even towards the delivery of the Queen's letter, which remained in the possession of Mr. Rassam, whose presence at Massowah continued to be unrecognised by the Emperor*.

Various messengers appear however to have passed to and fro, one of them being a brother or near relative of Samuel, the Emperor's steward †, with whom Mr. Rassam had established a friendly communication; whether or not in consequence of any previous acquaintance with him at Aden, I cannot say. Meanwhile, it having been discovered that Her Majesty's letter to the Emperor was not sealed with the Royal Signet and was in other respects insufficient, another letter duly signed and sealed was substituted for the original informal one, in the month of February or March 1865.

"At a later time," as was stated by Earl Russell in the House of Lords, "it was suggested that some military or naval officer would be treated with more respect [than Mr. Rassam], and he had therefore desired, through the India Office, that the Resident at Aden should send a military officer to Massowah; and such an officer had been sent" ‡. But the officer sent was only a subaltern, the third assistant to the Resident at Aden, who, being Mr. Rassam's subordinate, could not be "treated with more respect" than that gentleman. His presence however had the effect of exalting Mr. Rassam as the

* As late as the end of April 1865 Earl Russell admitted that "it did not appear from the last accounts that the King had taken any steps towards receiving that letter."—'Times,' April 28, 1865.

† See page 79, *note*.

‡ 'Times,' May 24, 1865.

head of the mission, which now consisted of himself, Dr. Blanc, and Lieutenant Prideaux.

In the Address to the Crown moved for by Lord Chelmsford, as has to be mentioned in the next Chapter, one of the particulars asked for was an "Account of the Presents sent to the King of Abyssinia to accompany the delivery of the Letter" under Her Majesty's sign manual; to which the answer given was, "None." Subsequently however—for the whole business, from beginning to end, has been a piece of patchwork—it was deemed advisable to send a present of five hundred stand of arms to the Emperor Theodore, as a ransom for Consul Cameron; and I did hear that the sum of 15,000 dollars was to be added as a makeweight. If I mistake not, the muskets still remain at Aden, no opportunity having occurred of sending them into Abyssinia—at all times a difficult task, as the Turks will not allow firearms to pass through Massowah into the interior. As to the dollars, I believe them to have been intended for secret-service money. Though it may not be material, still it is well to place on record that what I had thus heard was communicated by me on June 21st, 1865, to a nobleman holding office under the present Administration.

CHAPTER X.

DISCUSSIONS IN PARLIAMENT—LORD CHELMSFORD'S MOTION FOR AN ADDRESS—SIR HUGH CAIRNS'S INQUIRIES—FURTHER PAPERS PRODUCED—INQUIRY DEPRECATED BY GOVERNMENT—ALLEGED FEAR OF OFFENDING THEODORE—REAL FEAR OF MERITED CENSURE—OFFENSIVE LANGUAGE OF EARL RUSSELL AND MR. LAYARD—COMMENTED ON IN NEWSPAPERS—EARL RUSSELL DECIDES ON REPLACING MR. RASSAM—THE AUTHOR'S OFFER OF SERVICES—MR. PALGRAVE PREFERRED—AUTHOR'S LETTERS TO EARL RUSSELL—MR. PALGRAVE'S MISSION—ON THE POINT OF LEAVING EGYPT—MR. RASSAM ARRIVES THERE—MR. PALGRAVE STOPPED—REPORT OF CONSUL CAMERON'S RELEASE—ITS FALSEHOOD—MR. RASSAM'S LETTER TO EARL RUSSELL—EMPEROR'S LETTER—DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MR. RASSAM AND MR. PALGRAVE—THE FORMER PREVAILS—RETURNS TO ADEN—MR. PALGRAVE REMAINS IN EGYPT—FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

DURING the session of 1865 the subject of the imprisonment of the captives was brought before Parliament on repeated occasions; and in particular Lord Chelmsford in the House of Lords on the 23rd of May, and Sir Hugh Cairns in the House of Commons on the 30th of June, made some searching inquiries, which were strongly deprecated by both Earl Russell and Mr. Layard, as likely to prove injurious to the captives should the intelligence reach the Emperor Theodore. Lord Chelmsford, however, succeeded in carrying his motion for an Address to the Queen for the production of certain papers relating to the subject, though the Address was but imperfectly responded to by the Foreign Office*, some of the most

* Parliamentary Paper, 1865, 'Papers relating to the Imprisonment of British Subjects in Abyssinia.'

important documents being withheld. On the 5th of July of the same year, just before the prorogation of Parliament, when the subject was again discussed in the House of Commons, Mr. Layard promised to produce other papers, which, however, were not laid before Parliament till Mr. Darby Griffith moved for them on August 3rd, 1866*.

Throughout all the debates in both Houses of Parliament, and likewise out of doors among the friends of Lord Russell's Administration, every attempt was made to stifle inquiry and discussion, professedly lest it should injure the captives. Without citing, as I might easily do, numerous instances of this deprecation of inquiry, I will merely refer to what was said by Lord Shaftesbury as lately as May 3rd, 1866, as is recorded in page 152. In doing so, I must however repeat that I believe his Lordship to have been unwittingly the mouthpiece of others, whose fear of merited censure made them employ every means of putting off the day of reckoning until after the final liberation of the captives, when the general feeling of joy and gratitude for their safety would more than counterbalance the trouble and dissatisfaction which had been caused by such great mismanagement and long delay.

Had the dread of offending the Emperor Theodore been the real motive for this urgent desire to avoid discussion and inquiry, Earl Russell and Mr. Layard would themselves have been the first to set an example of moderation in their language respecting that potentate. Instead of

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence respecting the British Captives in Abyssinia.'

which, it is precisely these two statesmen who were guilty of applying the strongest and most offensive epithets to Theodore, and who spoke of his conduct with the greatest abhorrence*.

It is hardly necessary to adduce instances of what was at the time a matter of notoriety. A daily journal, when commenting on the debates in Parliament, says, in speaking of the captives:—"Their lives would be worth very little if Theodore should learn, whilst they are still at his disposition, in what offensive language Mr. Layard, in the name of the English Government, abused him"†. And a contemporary adds, "The Foreign Secretary went on to emulate his subordinate in applying abusive language to the Abyssinian Emperor, who is supposed to be so sensitive to such remarks"‡. This inconsistency is tersely put by 'Punch,' whose pages appear to contribute to the special recreation of the Emperor of Abyssinia§. On July 15th, 1855, that witty monitor says, in his 'Essence of Parliament,' "The Earl [Russell] described King Theodore as a blood-thirsty tyrant; and as Theodore has the English papers read to him, this may please him."

In consequence of the discussions in Parliament, Earl Russell at length decided on doing what he might better have done long before—namely, on taking the

* It is a fact worthy of notice that when the news of the ill-treatment of the missionaries first arrived, Lord Shaftesbury, did not scruple to call the Emperor a "barbarian Philistine." (See the 'Record' of May 9th, 1864.)

† 'Standard,' July 5th, 1865.

‡ 'Pall Mall Gazette,' July 5th, 1865.

§ Mr. Stern writes from Gondar, "Most of all was the inquisitive descendant of Solomon interested in the caricatures of 'Punch.'"

matter into his own hands, instead of leaving it, as it had thus far been left, in those of Mr. Layard and his nominee, Mr. Rassam. And Lord Houghton and the Earl of Malmesbury, on opposite sides of the House of Peers, having spoken of me in highly flattering terms in the debate on July 4th, and I having on the 7th of that month again offered to undertake the liberation of the captives on my own responsibility, his Lordship (as I have understood on unquestionable authority) had almost made up his mind to send for me and place the matter in my hands, when Mr. W. Gifford Palgrave, the accomplished traveller in Arabia, having been strongly recommended to Earl Russell, was preferred by him to me.

My letter of July 7th to Earl Russell is given in the Appendix, together with two other letters which I addressed to his Lordship on the 21st and 22nd of the same month.

The arrangements for Mr. Palgrave's mission were made with the utmost celerity and as secretly as possible. His instructions from Earl Russell were more favourable to Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal than those given by Mr. Layard to Mr. Rassam; for Mr. Palgrave was directed to secure the liberation of the German missionaries *in common with the Consul and other British subjects*; which, as has been shown in a former page*, was not the tenour of Mr. Rassam's instructions.

Having received his credentials from the Foreign Office, Mr. Palgrave proceeded to Egypt, where he lost no time in making the necessary preparations for his expedition; his intention being to enter Abyssinia from Matamma on

* See page 157.

the north-western frontier; and he is said to have expended considerable sums of money in the purchase of presents.

At the instance of Colonel Stanton, the Government of the Viceroy of Egypt, Ismail Pasha, took immediate and energetic measures for Mr. Palgrave's speedy voyage up the Nile, placing a steamer at his disposal, and giving orders to the authorities in the upper country to facilitate his further journey by land to the confines of Abyssinia. Two days more, and he would have been away from Cairo, pursuing his rapid voyage up the Nile under the most favourable conditions; when suddenly Mr. Rassam made his appearance at Suez, and put an end to Mr. Palgrave's undertaking*.

The circumstances under which Mr. Rassam thus visited Egypt are not a little remarkable.

When it had been decided by Earl Russell that Mr. Rassam should be superseded by Mr. Palgrave, the former gentleman was written to, both officially and privately, informing him of it; and he was ordered to return to his post at Aden, where his presence and most useful services had long been required.

There was no difficulty in communicating this intelligence to Mr. Rassam. The Steamer 'Victoria,' belonging to the Bombay Government, had been placed at the

* So little did Mr. Palgrave anticipate any *contretemps*, that on the very day of Mr. Rassam's arrival at Suez he left the private hotel at Cairo where he had been residing for several weeks, and removed to Shephard's hotel, for the purpose of giving a grand farewell dinner; notifying his departure in the register book of the hotel he had so left, and signing it "W. Gifford Palgrave, H. M.'s Envoi to Abyssinia, 5 Sept. 1865."

disposal of the Political Resident at Aden during the continuance of the mission to Abyssinia; and that vessel was almost incessantly engaged in keeping up a communication with Mr. Rassam. As was quaintly observed by a native gentleman, writing from Aden on the 17th of June 1865, "The 'Victoria' makes two trips monthly to and from Massowah, but brings no particular news. It is fact that the prisoners are in very bad condition; and if they stop longer in same, they will soon die. Very little remedy is done for them" *.

On the trip which the 'Victoria' made to Massowah towards the end of August, she conveyed to Mr. Rassam the intelligence of his recall, with orders to return by that vessel to his post at Aden. But instead of obeying those orders, Mr. Rassam turned the 'Victoria's' head the other way, and took his passage in her to Suez. On his arrival there, on September 5th, he despatched a telegram to Colonel Stanton at Alexandria, announcing that "Consul Cameron had been released," and that he had come on to Egypt to consult as to the course to be adopted in the altered state of affairs.

This most gratifying intelligence was immediately forwarded by Colonel Stanton to the Foreign Office, and was distributed by Mr. Layard with commendable alacrity to all the newspapers, appearing in their impression of September 6th in these words:—"Information has been received that Mr. Rassam had arrived at Suez, and had reported to Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General in Egypt that Consul Cameron had been released."

From the vague terms in which this intelligence was

* 'Pall Mall Gazette,' July 10, 1865.

given, a very general impression prevailed that Consul Cameron had not merely been released, but had even been brought on to Suez by Mr. Rassam, and therefore might soon be expected in England. But this hope was destined to be soon disappointed. It was "explained" that Consul Cameron had been released *from his chains only*; and after a short interval the further "explanation" was given that Mr. Rassam having made it a condition that the liberation of Consul Cameron should precede the delivery of the Queen of England's letter to the Emperor, the latter had ordered the Consul's chains to be removed in the presence of Mr. Rassam's messengers, so that they might be able to report what they had actually seen—and that then, as soon as the messengers were out of sight, the fetters had been replaced by heavier ones.

This explanation is understood to have been given by Mr. Rassam himself in a letter to Earl Russell, written on the same day on which he sent the telegram announcing, without any qualification, that Consul Cameron had been released. In Earl Russell's despatch of October 5th to Colonel Stanton, the following passage occurs:—"It appears from King Theodore's letter to Mr. Rassam, sent home by that gentleman in his letter of September 5th, that the King alleges that Captain Cameron 'abused and denounced him as a murderer,' in consequence of the vengeance he took on the persons who killed Consul Plowden and Mr. Bell, and that when he had treated him well and asked him to make him (the King) a friend of the Queen, Captain Cameron 'went and stayed some time with the Turks and returned to me (the King);' and further, that when the King spoke to Captain Cameron about

the letter sent by him to the Queen, he said he had not received any intelligence concerning it”*.

This certainly does not convey the idea that Captain Cameron could have been released even for a moment; and from private letters from all the principal captives—Mr. Stern, Mr. and Mrs. Rosenthal, Mr. Kerans, and Consul Cameron himself—dated about the middle of July, the fact is established that, in consequence of the escape of the Prince of Shoa on July 1st (as has been already related), all the European captives had had their chains doubled, fetters being placed on their hands as well as on their feet †; and it must be added that there is not in any of their letters a single word that would serve as a foundation for the report of Cameron's pretended release from his chains, even for a single moment, or under any pretence whatever.

The alleged letter from the Emperor bore neither the signature nor the seal of that monarch; and doubts have consequently been entertained as to its authenticity. On the other hand, I have heard that the letter was really written on the part of the Emperor, but that, in consequence of Mr. Rassam's having so long delayed to bring up the Queen's letter, His Majesty positively refused to address him in person. This does not, however, appear to be very material—the point that is really important being to know on what evidence Mr. Rassam telegraphed to Colonel Stanton, on September 5th, that Consul Cameron had been released, and what were the contents of the despatch which that gentleman addressed

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 63.

† See page 145.

on the same day to Earl Russell, enclosing a letter purporting to come from the Emperor Theodore. But, in truth, the whole matter of Mr. Rassam's visit to Egypt and of the intelligence which he was the medium of conveying to England, is altogether enveloped in mystery and requires explanation.

For the moment, however, there was not the slightest suspicion of the entire worthlessness of the intelligence; and consequently its immediate result was the putting a check upon Mr. Palgrave's mission.

When, shortly after Mr. Rassam's arrival in Egypt, it came to be known that the report put in circulation was unfounded, it became necessary to decide what should be done under the novel circumstances. Backed by his patron Mr. Layard, and doubtless encouraged by the official sympathies of the Foreign and India Offices—where, as in all Government departments, “outsiders” are not favoured—Mr. Rassam declined all fellowship with Earl Russell's nominee; and when it was proposed by an officer whose voice was entitled to be heard, that the one should go by the way of Massowah and the other up the Nile, or at all events that the two should proceed together, Mr. Rassam objected to this, and indeed to all compromise or arrangement of any kind, insisting that, if he was to continue to be employed, the business must be left in his own hands entirely and exclusively.

The final result was that Earl Russell's nominee had to yield to Mr. Layard's friend, who, after taking over the presents bought by Mr. Palgrave, and (it is said) adding thereto others which he himself purchased, left Cairo on the 18th of September, and returned to Aden

by the 'Victoria,' which vessel had been kept waiting for him at Suez.

Mr. Palgrave, on the other hand, remained behind in Egypt in the pay of the British Government, "to await," as was declared, "the result of Mr. Rassam's mission." There he continued until June 1866, though with what object is not patent. For when, in March last, news was received of Mr. Rassam's favourable reception by the Emperor and the ordered liberation of the captives—and, yet more, when in May the further intelligence arrived of their having been all handed over to Mr. Rassam, and being about to leave Abyssinia—nay, that they had even started for the coast—he still remained in Egypt under orders from the Foreign Office; whereas at the end of June, when Mr. Flad unexpectedly arrived in Egypt with intelligence of the "detention" of Mr. Rassam and his suite with all the captives (that is to say, of the unsuccessful "result of Mr. Rassam's mission," which he had been so long "awaiting"), he started off for England, running a race with Mr. Flad, and winning it by a length—he having (if I am rightly informed) reached London on July 8th, and Mr. Flad on the following day. That Mr. Palgrave did not come to England on the affairs of the captives in Abyssinia, is manifest from the fact that a few days only after his arrival he received a Consulship in the Black Sea, whither he has since gone. What the meaning of all this is remains an enigma, the solution of which, like that of a good many others arising out of this calamitous "Abyssinian Question," will doubtless be found in the further Papers which will have to be laid before Parliament in the approaching Session.

CHAPTER XI.

NO NEWS AT ADEN OF THE 'VICTORIA'—THE 'SURCOUF' SENT TO MASSOWAH TO INQUIRE—LETTERS FROM THE CAPTIVES—MESSENGER REFUSES TO GIVE THEM UP—THE 'SURCOUF' COMES BACK FOR THEM—THE CAPTIVES DOUBLE-IRONED—MR. RASSAM'S RETURN FROM SUEZ—GOES AGAIN TO MASSOWAH—DEPARTURE FOR THE INTERIOR—M. MUNZINGER—ADULIS A KEY TO ABYSSINIA—KNOWN TO GREEKS—AND TO FRENCH—IGNORANCE OF ENGLISH—ROAD BY THE HADÁS—MR. RASSAM'S JOURNEY BY BOGOS—ARRIVAL AT MATAMMA—ARRIVAL OF ESCORT—DEPARTURE FOR DEBRA TABOR—GAFFAT—STOPPED BY REBELS—ROUTE CHANGED—ARRIVAL AT EMPEROR'S CAMP—REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS—INTERVIEW WITH EMPEROR—THE QUEEN'S LETTER PRESENTED—THEODORE'S GRIEVANCES—CONSUL AND MISSIONARIES BLAMED—CAPTIVES ORDERED TO BE LIBERATED—THE EMPEROR'S ARMY—ITS MARCH—FRIENDLY BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS MR. RASSAM—ALL EUROPEANS ACCUSED—MR. RASSAM COMPLIMENTED—CHARGES UNTRUE AND ABSURD—MR. KERANS—IMPRISONED WITHOUT CAUSE—LETTER TO HIS PARENTS—HAND AND FOOT CHAINS—ILLUSTRATIONS—MADNESS OF CAPTIVES—SUFFERINGS WORSE THAN ON "THE MIDDLE PASSAGE"—PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY CALLED FOR.

WHILST Mr. Rassam was away on his visit to Egypt, a curious incident occurred, which is deserving of a place in the general history.

On that gentleman's leaving Massowah in the 'Victoria,' he gave to the Political Resident at Aden, by whom that vessel had been sent to convey him back to his post, no intimation of what he had done. Several days having elapsed without the 'Victoria's' making her appearance at Aden with Mr. Rassam on board, or any

intelligence of her, Colonel Merewether became anxious about the vessel, not unnaturally imagining that some accident must have happened; and the 'Surcouf,' a steamer of the French Navy, chancing to be then in the harbour, he requested her Commander to run across to Massowah and see what was the matter.

On his arrival at Massowah, the Captain of the 'Surcouf' not only heard of Mr. Rassam's sudden departure for Suez, for which no reason could be assigned, but he found at the same time that a native messenger had arrived from the interior with letters from Consul Cameron and the other captives, being those of the middle of July, containing the news of the flight of the Prince of Shoa and the consequent vengeance taken by the Emperor on all his captives, native and European. The French officer naturally asked for those letters, to take with him to Aden; but the messenger refused to give them up to any one but Mr. Rassam, who, it appears, had given orders to the Consul's clerk, Abdallah Effendi, in charge of the Consulate, that all letters arriving from the interior should be kept till his return. On this the Captain of the 'Surcouf' made the best of his way back to Aden and reported the facts to Colonel Merewether, at whose request he obligingly went over again to Massowah, with a peremptory order for the immediate delivery to him of the letters, which he brought away, together (if I am rightly informed) with the messenger himself, who still persisted in not parting with them except to his employer, Mr. Rassam.

The letters thus brought down from Consul Cameron and Mr. Stern announced that the Emperor had, about

the beginning of July, written to Mr. Rassam desiring him to come up to him at once; and they expressed the opinion that his speedy advent and the delivery of the Queen's letter would effect their liberation*.

Mr. Rassam was however gone to Suez, and consequently it was not till his return to Aden, about the end of September, that the contents of those letters could become known to him. The letters themselves, in consequence of their having been left lying at Massowah, did not arrive in England till October 11th; whereby the truthful intelligence that Consul Cameron and the other captives had been double-ironed was not received till upwards of a month after the report that "Consul Cameron had been released" had been in circulation.

On the return of the 'Victoria' to Aden with Mr. Rassam on board, she was ordered off to Massowah without loss of time; and in order to guard against a second flight into Egypt, and also to secure Mr. Rassam's prompt departure on his hitherto protracted mission, the Commander of that vessel had special orders to land that gentleman and his suite without delay, and to see to their immediate journey into the interior—a week, or at the utmost ten days, being allowed either to make the necessary arrangements for their departure, or else to bring them back to Aden.

Under such circumstances, every expedition could not fail to be used; and accordingly, on the 19th of October 1865, just fourteen months after Mr. Rassam's first arrival at Massowah with the Queen's letter, that gentle-

* Mr. Stern's letter to that effect is given in the Appendix.

man left the coast for the interior, accompanied by Dr. Blanc and Mr. Prideaux.

In the preparations for his journey, Mr. Rassam was materially aided by M. Werner Munzinger, the French Consular Agent at Massowah, whose intimate personal acquaintance with the regions they had to traverse, and general local knowledge, were of essential service.

If I am rightly informed, that gentleman has for several years past been settled at Keren, the chief place of Bogos, of which country he has married a native; and he is also established at Massowah as a merchant. After the affair of the 'Surcouf,' it was deemed advisable to have an European agent at Massowah; and M. Munzinger has in consequence had the English Consulate placed in his charge, in addition to that of France.

M. Munzinger is well known as a traveller and man of letters, and he has written several works relating to the countries he has visited—the principal one being 'Ost-africanische Studien'*, published about two years ago.

In the Introduction to that work, the author has referred to my pamphlet, 'The French and English in the Red Sea,' speaking of it favourably, except that he considers it to be too English †. I had endeavoured to be impartial, as M. Munzinger himself professes to be; and now, with every desire not to judge my critic unfairly, I should say that, if I am too English, he is too un-English. But all depends on the point of view. By birth M. Munzinger is a Swiss Roman Catholic, and (if

* 8vo: Schaffhausen, Fr. Hurter'sche Buchhandlung, 1864.

† "Eine Schrift von Hrn. Beke . . . die sehr lehrreich aber fast zu sehr englisch gefärbt ist."—*Einleitung*, S. 45.

I mistake not) he received a considerable portion of his education in France. It is not surprising, then, if, whilst intending to represent things as they present themselves to us, we should be looking on the two sides of the gold and silver shield.

Having thus had occasion to allude to M. Munzinger, it will not be out of place to mention here that, when my wife and I went to Abyssinia in the beginning of the present year, that gentleman, whilst rendering us many personal services and kindnesses, for which I shall always feel grateful, was decidedly opposed to our journey. He even went so far as to tell Mrs. Beke, in the hearing of more than one officer of the British navy, that he should do all in his power to prevent us from proceeding inland, which he subsequently explained to myself as meaning merely that he should exert his influence with me to induce me not to go. As regards the motive for his conduct, I desire not to offer an opinion. I speak only of the fact.

I must further mention that, when some of the officers of Her Majesty's ship 'Lyra' accompanied my wife and myself on shore, on a shooting-excursion, in the direction of Zulla, the representative of the ancient Adule, in Annesley Bay, whither Captain Parr, her excellent commander, was so good as to take us, in order that we might see whether a way inland was not practicable from that point, M. Munzinger assuredly did not help us; though when we were stopped by the Shohos he most promptly provided for our return in all safety and honour.

Still, in spite of obstacles of various kinds, the particulars of which will be related when I come to the narra-

tive of our recent visit to Abyssinia, I saw quite enough on that little trip, in connexion with our subsequent journey, to confirm the opinion I have so long entertained, that when the ancient Greeks founded Adule or Adulis, at the mouth of the river Hadás—now only a river-bed without water except during the rains, though a short way above there is water all the year round—they knew that they possessed one of the keys to Abyssinia; and I was also convinced that the French knew the same when they sought to obtain possession of that spot in December 1859, under the circumstances narrated in a previous Chapter*.

I perceived yet further that the authorities at Massowah were desirous that, as far as lay in their power, the *English* should not become acquainted with this road; and, however “English” it may be, my wife (on account of my

* Chapter IV. page 53. On December 26th, 1859, writing from Mauritius, I drew the attention of the Foreign Secretary, then Lord John Russell, to the designs of the French on Adulis. In 1861, I printed that letter and others addressed to the Foreign Office and the Board of Trade, appending to it in a note the following passage from an article (not from my pen) which had appeared in the ‘Times’ of December 6th, 1859:—

“The reader of Eastern history will recognize in Adoolis one of the four great Abyssinian emporia of the Indian trade in ancient times, the remaining three being Azab, Axum, and Meroë. Of these Adool, or Adoolis, appears to have been the most renowned, owing to its highly favourable position in the Red Sea, as also its fertility and safe anchorage. The skill of the ‘children of Adool’ in ship-building is eulogized in the *Moallaka* of Tarifa, a famous Arabian poet of the sixth century; and it was in the same century that, instigated thereto by Justinian, the Abyssinian *Nejachi*, or King, known to the Westerns by the name of Elisbaas, built 700 small vessels at Adool, and with the cooperation of a Roman fleet transported 70,000 Abyssinians into Arabia, and effected the conquest of Yemen.”

ill-health at the time I may truly say *dux femina facti**) and myself were determined that the English should become acquainted with it in case of need. I have therefore to place here on record that, in the four days from the 5th to the 8th of May inclusive, we descended from Halai, on the edge of the Abyssinian tableland at an elevation of 8500 feet above the ocean, to Arkiko, on the seashore opposite Massowah, travelling only in the morning and evening, and resting at night and during the heat of the day, and that the time we were actually in the saddle was $20\frac{3}{4}$ hours! Of this time $7\frac{1}{4}$ hours were consumed in crossing the low country between the Hadás and Arkiko; so that *only thirteen hours and a half were requisite to bring us down from the Abyssinian tableland to where that river turns off to Adulis and the sea.* And whilst in the upper country I obtained information respecting another road between the tableland and the sea, which is still better than that along the valley of the Hadás. This serves to show how erroneous is the notion of the inaccessibility of Abyssinia†.

* A "passed" candidate for a post in the Library of the British Museum might render this in English, "a duck of a woman indeed."

† It is surprising how little seems to be known in the several departments of our Government on the subject of the approaches to Abyssinia. A twelvemonth ago an officer holding a high position asked my opinion as to the choice to be made, in the event of a war, out of six routes, the particulars of which he had obtained (he said) from a source entirely to be relied on. Two roads known to myself, and both communicated by me long ago to Government, were not among those six, though preferable to them all! When the subject was again discussed very recently, I believe that one of my two roads was brought forward—though of course without any allusion to an "outsider" like myself—but the other still remained unnoticed.

Mr. Rassam did not, however, take his course in this direction. The letter from the Emperor, or whoever may have written it in his name, directed the mission to proceed westward through the border districts of Bogos, Barea, Taka, and Kedarif, to Matamma, where an escort was to be provided to conduct him to Debra Tabor, or wherever the Emperor might happen to be.

For the transport of the tents, stores, presents, and baggage of the mission thirty-five camels were needed, and with the requisite attendants and followers a goodly caravan was formed. No time appears to have been lost on the journey, which however was unavoidably slow.

The tardy and intermittent notices of Mr. Rassam's progress were at the time watched by the public with intense interest; but the particulars are now of little moment. It will be sufficient to note that he arrived at Kasala, the capital of the Egyptian province of Taka, on November 6th, and left that place on the 9th, and that on the 21st he reached Matamma. On his arrival there he wrote to the Emperor, informing him of it and asking for a safe conduct and an escort. After a delay of about a month (I have not the precise date), the long-expected escort arrived. It consisted of a strong body of soldiers under the command of three "bashas"* , whose orders were to give Mr. Rassam and the mission a most hearty welcome, and to escort them in safety to Debra Tabor, where they were to await the arrival of the Emperor, who had gone back into Godjam to attack the "rebel" Tádela Gwalu, who during so many years has set Theodore at defiance. The Emperor's European workmen at Gaffat

* The signification of this title is given in page 20.

were also written to, ordering them to receive Mr. Rassam and his suite, and to provide for their comfort in every way.

As Gaffat is not marked in the ordinary maps of Abyssinia, and there is a district in the south of the peninsula of Godjam, visited by me in October 1842, which formerly bore or was inhabited by a people who bore that name*, and which has been supposed to be the residence of the Emperor's European workmen, it may be well to explain that the place in question is a village in the immediate vicinity of Debra Tabor, where Consul Plowden used to put up when he visited Ras Ali or the present Emperor, and which has now become the permanent residence of the little colony of European gunsmiths and other workmen in the pay of the Emperor—a sort of Abyssinian Woolwich Arsenal.

From Matamma Mr. Rassam with his escort proceeded on the way towards Gondar and Debra Tabor, and on the 4th of January 1866 they reached a place called Belloha, between Wekhni and Tjelga (Chelga), when they were stopped by a body of troops belonging to the "rebel" Tessu Góbazye (not Góbazye the Waag Shum, but another powerful chief of the same name, the son of a person of low degree named Tessu), who for several years past has held rule in the larger portion of the north-western provinces of the empire down southwards as far as Gondar. It was reported at Massowah that Mr. Rassam had been taken prisoner, and only liberated by his escort after a hard fight with the rebels. Another report was that he obtained his freedom by paying a heavy ransom. At all events

* See 'Journal of the Royal Geographical Society,' vol. xiv. p. 24.

it is certain that he succeeded in escaping from Tessu Góbazye's soldiers, and that on January 11th he had arrived in safety within twenty miles of Gondar; which fact was duly notified in his^o despatches to Government of that date.

A reference to the map will show that at that time Mr. Rassam was at a short distance to the north of Lake Tsana, and that, had he continued his journey as originally contemplated, he would have gone along the north-eastern and eastern sides of the lake. But it would appear that, for some cause not yet explained, he did not continue on that course; for on January 28th (only seventeen days after he had written from near Gondar, saying he was going in the direction above indicated), we find him in Damot, about forty miles to the south of the south-western corner of Lake Tsana, and at no great distance from the source of the river Abai.

The road actually taken is nowhere stated; but I conjecture that, what between the one Góbazye and the other*, the country to the east side of the lake was not considered safe for Mr. Rassam to pass through, and that therefore orders had been sent to him and his escort to alter their course, and to proceed along the western side of the lake to join the Emperor.

However this may be, the result was, that on the 28th of January, 1866, Mr. Rassam at length reached the Emperor's camp. What occurred at the meeting and subsequently, is narrated in an abstract made by Colonel Merewether from Mr. Rassam's report to Her Ma-

* The Waag Shum's inroad from the north-east, mentioned in page 143, is believed to have occurred somewhere about this time.

jesty's Government'; which abstract was published in the 'Times of India' of July 21st, and has thence been copied into the 'Jewish Intelligence' of October 1st (pp. 294-256).

In giving here this abstract of Mr. Rassam's report *verbatim*, I feel myself called on to comment on several portions of it, which cannot be allowed to pass without observation.

"On the morning of the 28th January, Mr. Rassam, accompanied by Dr. Blanc and Mr. Prideaux, came in sight of the Emperor's camp, which was pitched in the district of Damot, between Agaumider and Godjam. As they had received a courteous message from His Majesty on the road, about three miles from the camp, to the effect that he had graciously ordered all his officers of state to meet them on the road and escort them to the court, they halted at 11 A.M. for about twenty minutes, to put on their uniforms, in a small tent which was pitched for the occasion, in order that they might be in fitting costume to meet the Abyssinian grandees.

"At noon they met the guards of honour that had been sent by His Majesty to welcome them. Ras Engeda, the Chief Minister, came forward on foot to welcome them on the part of his royal master, and made many civil speeches through Samuel, the King's steward, who had been sent by the Emperor to interpret. Mr. Rassam and his companions immediately dismounted, and after some civil words had been said in answer to the royal message, Ras Engeda presented Mr. Rassam with a fine mule, nicely caparisoned, saying that his master sent it for him to ride into the royal camp. Ras Engeda then rode before them

with about 300 officers, the rest of the cavalry riding behind, and they proceeded in this order at a quiet pace, until they reached the foot of the hill on which the King's pavilion was pitched. Here they dismounted, and were invited by Ras Engeda to take a little rest in a red cloth tent, which had been pitched by order of the King for their reception. After many polite speeches, Ras Engeda and Samuel left them, and went to report their arrival to the King. In the meanwhile refreshments were brought in, sent from the royal kitchen, together with a present of ten cows and as many sheep.

“About three o'clock Mr. Rassam received a very civil note from His Majesty, wherein he expressed his desire to see him. A verbal message accompanied the note, to the effect that, although the day was Sunday, the King could not delay the meeting any longer. Mr. Rassam and his companions accordingly repaired immediately to the royal pavilion. From the bottom of the hill they found musketeers ranged as a guard of honour on the right and left for their reception; and on coming in sight of the royal pavilion the infantry soldiers began to discharge their muskets (no cannon being available), and continued to fire in regular order till the visitors were ushered into the royal presence. The pavilion was made of silk, and carpeted with the same material.

“The King was a man of middle age, tall, well-built, with aquiline nose and dark piercing eyes. His countenance shows resolution and a powerful mind, while his smile is full of sweetness. His Majesty received them sitting on a couch covered with silk his throne having been left behind at Magdala, all the ministers of state

and officers of the court standing on either side of the tent.

“When Mr. Rassam had handed His Majesty the Queen’s letter, and interchanged a few civil words befitting the occasion, they were invited to sit down on the right hand of His Majesty. As the royal epistle was without a translation, and as there was no one in the court who could read English, His Majesty laid it on the right side of the couch, and began by saying that he was glad to see Mr. Rassam, and that he hoped they were all well after the fatigue of the long journey. All the ministers remained standing, and seemed very attentive to whatever was said by His Majesty and by Mr. Rassam in reply.

“The King then opened up the subject of his grievances, and related everything that had taken place from the time of the death of Messrs. Plowden and Bell. He blamed in strong terms the conduct of the missionaries and of Mr. Cameron. In reply to this Mr. Rassam spoke in a soothing way, and apparently succeeded in allaying the royal anger.”

Thus far Mr. Rassam. In the remarks I am about to make, I have no intention to dispute the accuracy of that gentleman’s report of what occurred in the conversations between him and the Emperor Theodore. But whilst accepting that report as veracious, I am not only warranted in denying the truth of the statements which are so reported, but also in contending that as Mr. Rassam, like myself and those acquainted with the real facts of the case, was aware of the untruth of these statements, he was not justified in repeating them without qualification or comment, so as to lead the general reader and

the public to believe in the truth of what the Emperor is thus reported to have said.

Mr. Rassam tells us that the Emperor "opened up the subject of his grievances," and that he then "blamed in strong terms the conduct of the missionaries and of Mr. Cameron"—as if that conduct had been at all "the subject of his grievances." How little the one had really to do with the other is fully shown in these pages, and is unhappily confirmed, at the cost of Mr. Rassam himself, by what has since occurred. It is much to be regretted for Mr. Rassam's sake that he should have allowed the Emperor's assertions to pass unnoticed. Of course, it would have been impolitic and uncourtierlike for him to contradict or even appear to doubt the truth of anything His Majesty might have thought fit to say to him. But in making his report to the British Government and to the British public, the same restraint was altogether unnecessary and indefensible.

Mr. Rassam next relates that, "During the conversation, Samuel was employed by the King as interpreter, and this officer was afterwards employed as 'introducer' for Mr. Rassam, in accordance with the Abyssinian rule,—an arrangement which appears to have been a satisfactory one, as Samuel knows Amharic and Arabic very well, and seems really desirous to promote a friendly feeling between England and Abyssinia."

From what has been stated in the biographical memoir of Samuel given in the note to page 79, and from his conduct towards the captives as related in Mr. Stern's letters in the Appendix, it is not improbable that Mr. Rassam may since have had cause to modify his opinion

with respect to that individual. It is only to be hoped that this is not the case, and that Samuel has proved to be really deserving of all the good said of him by Mr. Rassam. But it must be mentioned that that gentleman was seriously warned, by more than one person, against putting too much trust in him.

The report then continues :—“ Soon after they had returned to their tent after this interview, the King sent over Her Majesty’s letter to be translated into Amharic. This occupied a considerable amount of time, as Mr. Rassam had to translate it into Arabic, the interpreter and Samuel then retranslating it to the chief scribe in Amharic.

“ Very early next morning (Jan. 29) the King sent for them. They found His Majesty standing outside the Royal pavilion, and, after being welcomed, they were invited to enter. When all the attendants, except Ras Engeda, the chief scribe, Samuel, and Mr. Rassam’s Mohammedan interpreter, had been ordered to withdraw, the King again recounted his complaints regarding the misconduct of the European prisoners. He then expressed himself much pleased at having at last seen Mr. Rassam, and said that the friendly intentions of England towards himself had been proved by Mr. Rassam’s patience and good conduct, and concluded by ordering the chief scribe to read the letter which he had written to Her Majesty. This letter, which was afterwards sent to Mr. Rassam to be translated into English, was to the effect that the King had forgiven the European prisoners and made them over to Mr. Rassam ; but the exact contents were not at this time made public.”

Mr. Rassam does not give here any particulars respecting the liberation of the captives; but in the letter from Colonel Merewether to the Earl of Clarendon, which was read in the House of Lords on April 23rd, 1866, as has already been narrated*, it is said that “a few hours after his first interview with His Majesty, the latter ordered the release of all the European prisoners, including the missionaries and the Frenchmen, and directed that they should all be made over to Mr. Rassam to take out with him from Abyssinia, which country he hoped to leave about the end of March. The King sent his chamberlain to Magdala to unfetter the prisoners and to bring them to meet Mr. Rassam at Debra Tabor, to which place the latter and his companions were proceeding from the court, then in Godjam, and where he expected to receive the released captives about the end of February”†.

Mr. Rassam’s own report continues as follows :—

“The afternoon of the same day had been appointed for receiving the presents which Mr. Rassam had brought. He accordingly, about 5 P.M., brought the presents, and after making a suitable speech presented them to the King. His Majesty appeared much pleased, and after making an appropriate answer said that he accepted the gifts, not for their value, but for the sake of the giver, and in token of the renewal of friendship between himself and the British nation.

“Next morning (Jan. 30) the King intimated to Mr. Rassam that he intended him to go to Koráta, where he was to wait till the prisoners should be brought from Magdala. Koráta is a large town situated on the extreme limit

* See page 146.

† ‘Times,’ April 24, 1866.

of the south-east side of the Lake Tsana, at an elevation of about 6000 feet above the sea* ; and the Emperor had chosen it as the residence of his visitors on account of the cool breeze from the lake, and because they could there pass their time in fishing and shooting. They afterwards found the climate of Koráta neither very hot nor very cold, the temperature averaging 75° [Fahr.] in the day and 55° [Fahr.] at night, but they did not find it as invigorating as they expected.

“ His Majesty had determined to accompany them on their way for one or two stages, and accordingly marched that morning as far as Sákala, accompanied by the whole army, estimated at about 45,000 fighting men, with about an equal number of followers, male and female. The whole army is divided into four divisions, which always encamp round the Court in separate regiments, the favourite division being placed on the right side of the King. Most of the troops on this occasion had not their tents with them ; so that every day the soldiers had to build grass huts for themselves †. These huts are constructed with wonderful rapidity, and with great attention to order and neatness, the huts of the privates being arranged in a circle, with the huts or tents of the officers in the centre. Every time they march, though it be only for a mile or two, the soldiers set fire to their huts, so that on leaving a place hardly any trace of the encampment is left.

* The text has “600 feet,” by mistake. The elevation of Lake Tsana, on the shore of which Koráta is situate, is 6250 feet above the ocean.

† As a rule, the soldiers have no tents, but make *godjotj*, or huts of branches of trees covered with grass or straw, as described by Mr. Rassam.

“On the morning of the 31st they marched from Sákala to Bugata in the Metcha district. The King’s tent was here pitched on the top of a high hill overlooking parts of the districts of Damot and Metcha. These unhappy districts are under the wrath of His Majesty for having proved rebellious; and consequently he has determined to destroy them, and leave them a waste as a warning to the disobedient.”

Alas! the same sad story was told by M. Lejean in 1863*, and has been repeated every year since. Will no one take warning besides the inhabitants of those unhappy districts?

“For the first two days of the march Mr. Rassam and his companions had followed in the rear of the army. As the King found that they had been considerably inconvenienced by the crowding and turmoil of the troops, he on the third day (1st February) invited them to ride with him at the head of the army. The King rides most gracefully, and it was a fine sight to see the whole army following him at a rapid pace, stopping when he stopped, and turning to the right or the left as he turned, as though the movements of this great mass had been directed by machinery. Those who rode with His Majesty were Ras Engeda, Mr. Rassam, Dr. Blanc, Mr. Prideaux, Samuel, and the King’s arm-bearers. On the march the King showed himself extremely kind and hospitable, sending them rations from his kitchen, and directing their tent to be pitched near his own, on a spot which he himself pointed out.

“Next day (2nd February) they marched soon after

* See page 92.

sunrise, and about 1000 yards from the camping ground came to the River Abai (the source of the Blue Nile). His Majesty crossed the river on foot, and made Mr. Rassam and his companions ride; but as Mr. Rassam's mule found it difficult to carry him up the opposite bank, which was steep, the King told him to dismount, and, while he was trying to climb the bank, condescendingly caught him by the arm and pulled him up, saying in Arabic, '*Ibshin, la takhaf,*' that is, 'Be of good cheer, be not afraid.' He then remained standing on the bank till he saw the road made sufficiently good for the army to pass. This day they halted at Omka, where there was a tremendous shower of rain. The thunder and lightning were frightful.

"Next day (3rd February) the march was in the direction of Agaumider, the last district through which the mission had passed before reaching the King. The King on this day conversed with Mr. Rassam on various topics—the American war, the Ashantee war, *the barbarity of the King of Dahomey*, and the Government of Madagascar. He also said to him, 'The reason I did not at first give you an answer was, because, since the death of Messrs. Plowden and Bell, all the English and Franks who visited my country proved to be insincere, ill-mannered, ill-behaved, and ill-tempered. I said to myself, I must not see this English agent before I find out that he is of a different temperament from those who created a breach between me and your Queen, my friend. Your patience in waiting so long for an answer convinced me of your worth; and now, as you have happily established the renewal of friendship between my country and England, I wish you to carry to your Queen, my friend, and to her

council, my anxiety to cultivate the friendship of England, which I have longed for ever since I ascended the throne of Abyssinia.”

Here, again, all that is represented by Mr. Rassam as having actually been said by the Emperor of Abyssinia to himself as the Envoy of Her Britannic Majesty, we are bound to accept as having actually been said.

As regards the compliments paid to that gentleman on account of his “patience in waiting so long for an answer,” whereby the Emperor Theodore had been “convinced of his worth,” if his vanity would allow him to accept them as a satisfactory apology for his twelve months’ detention at Massowah, there is really nothing to be said against it. I would however prefer to give Mr. Rassam credit for more good sense, and to imagine that as a well-trained courtier he maintained a becoming gravity, without appearing in the least to doubt the truth of anything the Emperor might think fit to say.

But when Mr. Rassam noted down that monarch’s unqualified assertions respecting the unfortunate captives, throwing upon them the blame of having “created a breach between him and our Queen,” he cannot be excused for putting such falsehoods into circulation without a word of dissent or protest, and thus as it were vouching for their truth.

Moreover the reason alleged for the Emperor’s not having given Mr. Rassam an answer at first is worse than untrue: it is absurd on the face of it. Who are “all the English and Franks who have visited Abyssinia and proved to be insincere, ill-mannered, ill-behaved,

and ill-tempered"? Never was there in the mind of the Emperor or of any one else a thought of ill-conduct on the part of any of the Europeans resident in Abyssinia till after his quarrel with Consul Cameron; which quarrel however was not at all on account of that officer's personal misbehaviour, but was occasioned by the ill feeling of the Emperor towards the Government whose representative Consul Cameron has the great misfortune to be. And how many Europeans are there not still in Abyssinia, both "English" and "Frank" (that is to say, Protestant and Roman Catholic),* who continue to enjoy that monarch's favour and protection? Such an assertion then, let it emanate from whom it may, is absurd from its attempt to prove too much.

* In page 77 of a work published in 1860, entitled 'Notes from the Journal of F. M. Flad, one of Bishop Gobat's Pilgrim Missionaries,' is the following note:—"By Englishman an Abyssinian understands not an English subject, but a Protestant as distinct from a Frenchman, by which he understands a Roman Catholic." On this I must remark that it is not so much the Abyssinians themselves who understand the expression "Englishman" in that sense, as it is the Germans under English protection who wish them so to understand it. The character of England, as a nation, has not been raised thereby in the estimation of the natives; for they say that the "Englishmen" who formerly visited their country were independent persons, who by travelling in Abyssinia benefited the princes and the inhabitants, whereas they are now poor persons who come to work in their service and get their living at their expense. But the Emperor evidently does not distinguish between Protestants and Roman Catholics. He has both in his employ; and in his estimation, as may be seen from his proclamation in page 125, and also from Mr. Stern's letters in the Appendix, they are all *Frendjotj* or Franks. In the more remote provinces, where Europeans are little known, they are all called *Gebtsotj* (plural of *Gebtsi*) or Copts—that is to say, Christians, in contradistinction to *Turkotj*, or Turks, meaning Mohammedans.

In a former Chapter* it has been shown how the missionaries Stern and Rosenthal fell into disgrace. I have now to adduce the case of the latest victim of Theodore's malice against the British Government—a person whose name has never been brought prominently forward, and yet who, taking all the circumstances into consideration, must be regarded as having been more unfortunate than any of the other captives, because there really does not appear to have been the slightest cause of complaint against him, except that he was a British subject and connected with Her Majesty's Consul.

Mr. Lawrence Kerans, a son of Dr. Kerans of Ahascragh, in county Galway, went out to Abyssinia in the year 1863, to fill the post of Secretary to Consul Cameron.

- As has been already related†, he was the bearer of despatches from the Foreign Office, and by ill fortune arrived at Gondar on November 22nd, 1863. Owing to the contents of the despatches of which Mr. Kerans happened to be the bearer, our Consul, who “had previously had his hands half-bound,” had them “bound altogether.” How Mr. Kerans himself was treated at that particular juncture does not anywhere appear, though, as being the bearer of the obnoxious documents which caused his principal to be imprisoned, it is not to be imagined that he, the subordinate, fared much better. At all events, on January 4th, 1864, only six weeks after his arrival, when he could hardly have had time to manifest many of the bad qualities imputed to *all* Europeans antecedent to Mr. Rassam, Mr. Kerans was put in chains; and so he remained till February 24th, 1866 (nearly six-and-

* Chapter VII., pages 113-117.

† See page 122.

twenty months), when he was liberated with the rest,—though only to be incarcerated again, on Mr. Rassam's account,* in less than six months afterwards!

Here is what this much-to-be-pitied young man wrote to his parents when he had been a prisoner *only* eighteen months:—

“ *Amba Magdala, July 14th, 1865.*

“ MY DEAREST FATHER AND MOTHER,—I have with much delight this morning, *for the first time these last two years*, received news from home. I am glad to hear you are all well. Now, dear father and mother, you must be very anxious to know how we are getting on. To begin with, *I am now a year and six months in prison, with chains of 20 lbs. weight on the legs*; and lately the right hand has been attached to the feet. You cannot imagine what fearful sufferings I have to go through every day; *it has been much worse with us before than it is now, but still it is a sad torment.* Our only hope is in God, who has delivered us many times when we were at the point of death, and I trust still (no matter how gloomy it now appears) He will ere long deliver us. I can't write all I wish about our imprisonment, as it might cause great danger to me and my fellow captives. Hoping I may yet live to see all who are near and dear to me, I remain, dearest father and mother, ever your affectionate son,

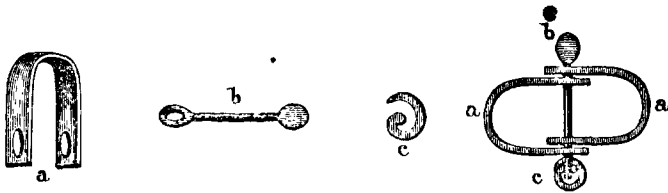
“ LAWRENCE KERANS,

“ *Secretary to Consul Cameron.*

“ There are here in chains, besides myself, Consul Cameron, the Rev. H. A. Stern, Mr. Rosenthal, M'Kilvie, Makerer, and Pietro; and Mrs. Rosenthal and child not in chains.”

Mr. Stern has thus explained what the character of these hand- and foot-chains is :—“ This art of tormenting (which is ascribed to the wise King of Israel) is a most cruel invention, particularly when, as in our case, the fetters are so short, that one is actually bent double and unable to move about by day or to stretch one’s weary limbs by night”*; and Mr. Rosenthal, whilst corroborating Mr. Stern’s statement by saying, “ Hand- and foot-irons were put on us in such a manner that we could not stand upright,” adds “ My fetters were of a specially cruel construction. Usually the manacles are separated by two or three links of chain; mine, however, constantly kept my feet within one-eighth of an inch close together, and when I desired to move I was obliged to crawl upon both hands and feet”*.

From a drawing made by M. Bardel, I am enabled to give in the Frontispiece an illustration of the attitude in which these wretched sufferers, when thus chained hand and foot, had to pass so many months of torture and misery; whilst below is a representation of the Abyssinian slave leg-shackles, drawn by myself when in that



country, which will serve to explain the peculiar punishment inflicted on Mr. Rosenthal. In a footnote is given my description of these slave-shackles, published

* See Mr. Rosenthal’s letter in the Appendix.

in 'The Friend of the African' for June 1844*, on which I have to remark that the Abyssinian slave-dealers find it sufficient to shackle their Shánkala or negro slaves on the legs only, so that they have their hands free, and at the same time can move about "by taking short jumps with both feet close together;" whereas Mr. Rosenthal, by having, like his companions in captivity, one hand fastened (as shown in the Frontispiece) to his leg-shackles, was not only bent double like them, but "was obliged to crawl upon both hands and feet."

Some time after Mr. Rassam's arrival at Massowah, he managed to get some warm European clothing conveyed to the captives. But, without the skill of the brothers Davenport, how were they to pass coats and trousers over their shackled limbs? Consequently they were only tantalized by the sight of garments which they were unable to put on.

* "Two semicircular—or rather longer than semicircular—hoops of iron (*a*) of about one-eighth of an inch in thickness and nearly an inch in breadth—those for a female or child of lighter make—having a hole pierced at each end, are fastened together by a round iron bolt (*b*), the one end of which is flattened out so as to prevent its passing through the holes, and the other (likewise flattened out) is pierced so as to admit of an open ring of soft iron (*c*) being passed through it, the ends of which ring are then gently beat together. It is scarcely necessary to add that one hoop is placed round each ankle, before the bolt is passed through the two from the front, so as to rivet them. When the shackle is to be taken off, the ends of the ring are separated by placing them on the edge of a chisel-shaped piece of iron, and hammering on them. These shackles are put on during the night, and also occasionally in the daytime, preventing the captive from moving otherwise than by taking short jumps with both feet close together; and the ring being behind, it is impossible for him to remove it. No chain or other restraint is considered necessary, since the distance a person could jump must necessarily be but very small."—Vol. ii. pp. 8–9.

It is no wonder, then, that the wretched captives, confined and tortured as they were, should have been "ill-mannered, ill-behaved, and ill-tempered"—nay, that some of them should have become "insane," as they are stated to have been in a letter from Mr. Rassam himself, which was read by Colonel Playfair at a Meeting of the Royal Geographical Society on June 25th last*, and as I have but too much reason to believe to be the fact from information obtained from other sources. In truth, it is hardly possible to conceive any state of mind that might not have been induced by this protracted confinement of a heterogeneous medley of persons of different nations, religions, characters, dispositions, habits of life, and ways of thinking, all crowded together—several of them loathing or hating one another intensely, yet having no means of withdrawing from their proximity to the objects of their abhorrence.

Of its outward manifestation some faint idea—and still only a very faint idea—may be formed from the following appalling statement from the pen of one of the captives:—
"All our people are half mad, and quarreling like so many devils. Fortunately the fit passes over after a few days from sheer exhaustion, or we should worry one another to death. The man with the longest tongue carries the day. The best temper in the world could not stand the wear and tear of this coarse, brutal life."

Can anything be more awful than the thoughts which these few words conjure up? Such a state must be far worse than that of our jails, our convict-prisons, or even the French *bagnes*.

* See the 'Times,' June 27, 1866.

Several years ago, when a friend of mine was preparing for publication a work called 'A Cry from the Middle Passage'* , I frequently discussed with him the details of the atrocious occurrences to which he had occasion to refer ; but, heart-rending as those details were as regards the physical sufferings of the wretched negro victims of human barbarity, I feel firmly convinced that when the secrets of the prison-house of Magdala shall one day be revealed, the entire annals of "the Middle Passage" can hardly furnish a case which, for the combination of lingering mental as well as physical torture, will bear comparison with that of the European prisoners of this African despot.

In the approaching session of Parliament, will no Member of the Legislature make "The Abyssinian Question" the subject of earnest and searching inquiry? A seat in the House of Commons is certainly a distinction which I never coveted and with each year of my life have felt less ambitious of; but I must confess that, since I have been led by circumstances to identify myself with the cause of the British Captives in Abyssinia, I have often wished, and I cannot help at times still wishing, that I were so placed for a season, solely for the purpose of sifting to the bottom all the circumstances of this complicated and still hidden question, the thorough understanding of which concerns not the fate of the aggrieved captives alone, but also the honour and the interests of the British nation.

* London (Seeleys), 1850.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. RASSAM'S REPORT CONTINUED—PRESENT OF 15,000 DOLLARS—CAPTIVES ORDERED TO BE RELEASED—JOURNEY FROM MAGDALA—ARRIVAL AT KORATA—LIST OF PRISONERS RELEASED—MR. RASSAM HONOURED—DECEIVED—HIS MISTAKEN ESTIMATE OF ABYSSINIANS—TRIAL OF CAPTIVES—THEIR ALLEGED CONFESSION—MR. WALDMEIER'S STATEMENT—MR. PURDAY'S REPLY—REASONS FOR MR. RASSAM'S REPORT—EXPECTED SUCCESS—DESIRE TO SCREEN HIMSELF AND THE GOVERNMENT—MISSIONARIES WITHOUT DEFENCE—CONSUL TO BE BLAMED AND EMPLOYED ELSEWHERE—FAILURE OF PLAN—REAL TRUTH—THE CAPTIVES ARE STATE PRISONERS.

THE necessity for defending the hapless captives from the charges so unjustly brought against them by their persecutor, and so ungenerously repeated by their would-be liberator, made me in the last Chapter digress from the consideration of the report of Mr. Rassam's proceedings. I now return to it.

After relating the conversation between that gentleman and the Emperor on the 3rd of February, the narrative continues:—"This day's march brought them to Fugata, passing through the well-cultivated and peaceful country of Agaumider; and it was most cheering to see how well His Majesty protected the crops of his faithful subjects, sending parties commanded by officers to guard the corn-fields and villages against the ravages of the soldiery.

"Next day (4th February) the King had much conversation with Mr. Rassam, and ended by telling him that he proposed to send him to Koráta, allowing him to choose

whether he would stay at Koráta or at Debra Tabor till the prisoners arrived; and after he retired to his tent he sent Mr. Rassam a most polite note, informing him that he had sent him some guns and pistols, and also 5000 German crowns [Austrian species-dollars of A.D. 1780] to spend in any manner he wished, 'except in a way displeasing to God.' These presents Mr. Rassam was obliged to accept, as he was told that it would displease the King if he refused them. Twice afterwards the King gave Mr. Rassam a present of 5000 dollars, for the same purpose and with the same admonition."

In the letter from Mr. Rassam to Colonel Playfair, read at the Meeting of the Royal Geographical Society, to which allusion has already been made*, it is stated that the Emperor "insisted on Mr. Rassam's acceptance of 10,000 dollars for his expenses, which our Envoy at first refused, but found it politic to accept and credit the sum to Her Majesty's Government." For the reasons already stated in the 'Times' of July 6th, 1866†, I cannot but think it to have been most impolitic to accept any such present. When Consul Plowden was offered by the same

* See page 197.

† My words were these:—"I feel myself, however, called upon to remark that when Mr. Rassam so complacently vaunted the excessive humility of the Emperor Theodore towards the Queen of England, and his having (as reported in the 'Times' of the 29th of June last) 'insisted on Mr. Rassam's acceptance of 10,000 dollars' [Mr. Rassam himself now says 15,000 dollars in all] 'for his expenses, which our Envoy at first refused, but found it politic to accept and credit the sum to Her Majesty's Government,' he can hardly have contemplated that such a gift was intended as a *mamáladja*, which in Isenberg's Amharic Dictionary is defined as a 'present presented by an inferior person to a superior,' and for which the donor expects in return not merely an equivalent, but something of very much greater value. So

monarch "some hundred dollars for the expenses of his journey," he replied, "that as for the money he could not receive it, as he was paid by his own Sovereign"*; at which Theodore does not appear to have taken offence, but on the contrary spoke to Mr. Plowden "in the most affectionate manner," and "gave orders for his honourable reception everywhere as far as Massowah"†. And, besides, there really does not seem to have been any means of spending the money in a legitimate manner—in a way not displeasing to God; for the Emperor would not allow Mr. Rassam to make presents, and himself supplied the mission with all they stood in need of. According to that gentleman's letter to Colonel Playfair, "The Emperor's orders to supply Mr. Rassam with provisions and carriage free of expense on his way to the Court were carried out to the letter; everything was provided on the road on the most liberal scale. Sometimes their daily rations reached as high as 1000 loaves of bread ‡, 2 cows, 20 fowls, 500 eggs, 10 jars of milk, 10 of honey, &c."

It is not at all clear therefore what Mr. Rassam could

conscious was I of this usage in Abyssinia, that never during my long residence in that country would I, under any pretence, accept a present from an inferior without first understanding what I was to give in return; and whenever I asked a favour of a superior I first presented my *mamáladja*.

"It was not without a motive, then, that the Emperor Theodore lowered himself so exceedingly before Her Britannic Majesty in the person of her representative; and the question put hypothetically on the 27th of April has now become a sad reality. What will Her Majesty's Government do under existing circumstances?"

* See page 49.

† *Ibid.*

‡ It must not be supposed that these are European loaves. They are pancakes, each made of a cup of batter.

do with these 15,000 dollars, except take them on with him wherever he went; and half a ton of silver (for they weigh nearly as much*) is no trifle to carry about in a country like Abyssinia. In addition to this, it may be presumed that Mr. Rassam had already the 15,000 dollars from Aden, to which allusion was made in the last Chapter †, in addition to money for his ordinary expenses.

The narrative continues:—"The next day (5th February) they left for Koráta, and crossed the south-eastern side of the lake from Wandige [Woinadágga?] and Koonsila, right on to the island of Dak. The Emperor afterwards came to Zágge, on the S.W. side of the lake, and not more than ten miles from Koráta by water. This was after he had destroyed the districts of Damot and Metcha.

"As Mr. Rassam and his companions were to wait at Koráta for the arrival of the prisoners, the Emperor sent to Debra Tabor and brought his European artisans to keep them company. Orders for the release of Mr. Cameron and the other prisoners were given on the 29th of January; but they were not released till the 24th of February ‡, owing to the difficulties of travelling."

The subsequent occurrences cannot be better related than in the words of Mr. Stern in a letter to his wife, dated Koráta, March 22nd. He says, "Our manacles were removed on February 24th, and on the 26th we

* An Austrian species-dollar of 1780 should weigh 433 grains, but usually does not weigh more than 430. Then $430 \times 15000 \div 7000$ (the number of grains in a pound avoirdupois) = 921 lbs.

† See page 161.

‡ Consul Cameron's letter dated February 26th, given in page 145, says, "Our chains were taken off *yesterday*." From this I conclude that the date of his letter was really the 25th.

quitted the rocky heights on which we had been confined for sixteen interminable months. Two days we remained encamped at the foot of Amba Magdala to regain some strength, as several of us, myself among the number, could scarcely stand upright, much less ride any considerable distance. Freedom, change of air, and the luxury of unshackled hands and feet, however, effected a wonderful alteration in our exhausted and enervated frames. On the 7th inst. we reached Gaffat, where Mr. Flad and our former fellow prisoners gave us a most cordial reception. We remained one night with these friends, and then in company started for Koráta, the temporary home of Mr. Rassam, and in the vicinity of the royal camp. From the kindness and attention we experienced as we advanced on our journey, hope, so long deadened in our hearts, began again to revive, and visions of liberty (to which for more than two years we had been strangers) again brightened our future. Our enterprising, excellent friend, *Mr. Rassam received us with that cautious coldness which our mutual position rendered indispensable.* Messengers were despatched the same night to announce our arrival to His Majesty; and on the morning of the 15th inst., a complete reconciliation was effected, before Mr. Rassam and royal delegates, between the King and his white prisoners. We are now waiting with yearning impatience for the permission to leave Abyssinia—a question which is still subject to the variable mood of His Majesty.”

Of the released prisoners, Mr. Rassam's report says, “They arrived safely at Koráta on the 12th March. Mr. Cameron was at first very weak, but rapidly im-

proved; all the rest were in perfect health. Eighteen prisoners, including three children, were made over by the Emperor to Mr. Rassam, to be conducted to Aden, or to Egypt if they went *via* Khartoum. The prisoners who were in chains at Magdala were four English (one of them the wife of Mr. Rosenthal), two Germans, two Frenchmen, and one Italian; and the persons who were detained at Gaffat, near Debra Tabor, were six Germans (one of them the wife of Mr. Flad), and the three children of the latter."

The following is a list of the released prisoners issued from the Foreign Office to the newspapers, arranged here according to their nationalities.

Prisoners who were in chains at Magdala.

Mr. C. D. Cameron, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul	}	English.
Mr. L. Kerans, late Secretary of Mr. C. D. Cameron		
Mr. R. McKelvey*, late servant of do.		
Mrs. E. Rosenthal		
Rev. H. A. Stern, Missionary †	}	Germans.
H. Rosenthal, Missionary		
J. Makerer, servant of Consul Cameron	}	Frenchmen.
A. Bardel, formerly in service of do.		
D. Pietro, late servant of Consul Cameron		Italian.

Prisoners who were detained at Gaffat.

W. Steiger, Missionary	}	Germans.
T. Brandeis, Missionary		
K. Schiller, { Natural History Collectors		
J. Essler, {		
J. M. Flad, Missionary		
Mrs. P. Flad		
A. Flad, {	}	Children of the above Mr. and Mrs. Flad
Fr. Flad, {		
P. Flad, }		

* This name has hitherto appeared as McKilvie.

† As stated in page 157, Mr. Stern is the bearer of a Foreign Office passport, in which he is described as a British subject.

Mr. Rassam's narrative then continues as follows:—
“ During the whole of this time the Emperor treated Mr. Rassam with the greatest kindness and consideration. He would not allow him to make presents to any of the people of the Court who had been kind and civil, but said, ‘ Keep your money for other of my people who render you service, my friend; but if you wish to make any present to those of my household, let me know the sum, and I will pay it to them on your part.’ He however consented to allow him to invest those of his household with silk garments.

“ He gave general orders that the servants of the Court should pay to Mr. Rassam the homage due to the representative of his friend the Queen of England; and therefore when they presented themselves before him they always knelt and touched the ground with their foreheads. And when Mr. Rassam arrived by water at Koráta, nearly sixty priests dressed in canonicals came out on the beach to meet him, bearing the symbols of the Abyssinian Church, chanting hymns and praying for him. And this they did because the Emperor had commanded that they should receive Mr. Rassam with the same honours as they would accord to himself. Every one therefore, whether European or Abyssinian, admitted that no sovereign could be more attentive and gracious to the representative of a foreign government than Theodorus of Abyssinia was to Mr. Rassam.”

Nothing can be further from my desire than to say anything unkind of Mr. Rassam in his present unfortunate position. Still the historian has to deal with facts, and I cannot avoid regarding it as a fact that that gentleman

allowed himself to be completely deceived by the outward forms of kindness and respect on the part of the Emperor Theodore and his people; of whom he appears to have formed an entirely erroneous estimate. Doubtless his mistake was in part due to defects on his own side. Mr. Rassam may be all that my friend Sir William Coghlan says of him*, when at Aden, at Muscat, or at any other place directly under British influence and immediately within the range of British power; but, as was objected by the present Lord Chancellor (Lord Chelmsford) in the House of Lords on April 27th, 1865, when first calling attention to the subject of the British Captives in Abyssinia, Mr. Rassam, though a man of great experience and ability, is "just the sort of person who ought not to have been selected for the purpose; and the consequences were just such as might have been expected"†. This was said almost oracularly; for at that

* See page 156.

† See the 'Times' of April 28th, 1865. The following discussion in the House of Lords on February 10th, 1866, more than nine months later, is deserving of being recorded here, for other reasons besides its bearing on the subject of Mr. Rassam:—

"The Earl of CLARENDON.—The first we heard, not of the imprisonment, but of the detention of Consul Cameron, came by rumour through Egypt. It was then to be considered in what manner we should proceed—whether by force or negotiation, in order to effect the liberation of the prisoners. Now, *to attempt to send an army across that deadly plain which separates Abyssinia from the sea, and to penetrate into the interior of the country through mountain passes and difficulties unknown, without any basis of operations or means of obtaining supplies, would have been a vain and idle endeavour.* In such case the Emperor would have carried his prisoners further into the interior or would have massacred them, while we should have sacrificed many thousand lives. Next came the question how should an attempt be made to attain the desired

time, now nineteen months ago, the only cause of complaint was Mr. Rassam's long stay at Massowah without making any advance.

Perhaps a more cogent reason for Mr. Rassam's mistake may be his having regarded the Abyssinians as

object by negotiation. The noble lord said that if he had been responsible for the matter, he would have sent out an important mission headed by a man of rank. I think he would have done no such thing; for it is likely that the members of that mission would have shared the same fate as Consul Cameron. We have evidence for believing that the Emperor of Abyssinia supposed that by keeping these men prisoners he would compel the British Government to adopt his policy. Therefore I think that every man belonging to such a mission as the noble lord suggested would have been thrown into chains; and I need not say how much the difficulties of the case would have been aggravated by such an event. That Consul Cameron had fallen into a state of captivity was his own fault; but if the Queen had sent from this country an important mission, and if all the members of it had been thrown into chains, it would then have been necessary to adopt every measure to obtain their release, or the prestige of England would have been at an end throughout the East. In the case of the present prisoners we had to decide on the selection of an efficient agent, and our choice fell on Mr. Rassam. I am at a loss to account for the hostility of the noble and learned lord towards Mr. Rassam.

“Lord CHELMSFORD.—I have invariably said that I had no doubt Mr. Rassam was a man of very great ability. My only objection to his appointment was—and I considered it a conclusive objection—that he was not a European.

“The Earl of CLARENDON.—The noble and learned lord has always contended that he was an unfit person to be sent out on his present mission.

“Lord CHELMSFORD.—Only on that ground.

“The Earl of CLARENDON.—The language of the noble and learned lord was, I maintain, calculated to lead the Emperor of Abyssinia, if his words reached him, to think that to send Mr. Rassam on this mission was an insult towards him on the part of this country. The noble and learned lord and the press have thus, I am sorry to say, done their best to second the failure of that mission.”—‘Times,’ February 10, 1866.

an Eastern rather than as a Western people; who, corrupted, debased, and half-savage as they have become, are still Western in their religion, their laws, and in what little of literature and science they still retain. For it must always be borne in mind that, in addition to the Scriptures, both of the Old and of the New Testament, which they enjoyed when most of the nations of Europe were pagan savages, their code of laws is substantially that of the Roman Empire, on which all our modern European legislation is based; whilst they derived from the Greek school of Alexandria whatever other learning they once possessed, and of which some traces, however faint, may still be detected among them. What nation on the face of the globe is there, then, whose ideas must necessarily possess so much in common with those of the now civilized nations of the West, on account of the sources whence their ideas were derived in common, as this remote and neglected ruin of the great and powerful Christian Empire of Ethiopia*?

The narrative continues:—"The Emperor wished to see the released prisoners for the purpose of asking them before Mr. Rassam whether he was not right in what he did to them, in consequence of their misbehaviour. But Mr. Rassam, fearing that their presence would irritate the Emperor, begged him to dispense with their presence. The Emperor accordingly agreed that Mr. Rassam should hold a court in his tent, and have the charges read out to the released prisoners before all

* Of the great power of Ethiopia in the sixth century of our era a striking instance is given in the footnote in page 177.

the European artisans of Gaffat, and before a number of the principal Abyssinian officers. The chief Amharic scribe read out the charges. Then all the released prisoners confessed that they had done wrong, and begged that His Majesty would forgive them as a fellow Christian. Afterwards the Emperor wrote to Mr. Rassam, and asked him to judge between him and the released prisoners: 'If I have done them wrong let me know, and I will remunerate them. But if you find them in fault, I will give them back my love.'

Mr. Rassam has not mentioned what answer he gave to the Emperor's request that he "should judge between him and the released prisoners," though there can be little difficulty in deciding what that answer must have been, if, as is stated, "all the released prisoners confessed that they had done wrong." But even then, it is essential to know the extent of the "wrong" to which they or any of them pleaded guilty. On this point a recent correspondence in the 'Record' newspaper is very apposite and instructive.

The impression of that journal of July 11th, 1866, contains the following article:—

"We are requested by the Secretary of the Gobat Fund to publish the following extract from a letter of Mr. Waldmeier to Bishop Gobat, dated Quarata* (Abyssinia), 20th March, 1866. We accede to his request, leaving out however some passages which are uncalled for, and can do no good; but in doing so we undertake no re-

* Koráta. This name is variously spelled, owing to the difficulty of representing with English letters the native sounds in the three Amharic characters, Kwë-ra-tsa. Mr. Waldmeier spells his own name as above, not Waldmeyer as printed.

sponsibility for the truth of its contents. In the absence of authentic intelligence from the captives themselves, we can neither judge of the probability of the confession attributed to Mr. Stern, nor estimate the importance to be given to it.

“ ‘ Three weeks ago the King ordered us to come to Quarata, a town on the south-east coast of the lake Zana. Mr. Rassam has already spent a month here, where we have had the great pleasure of making his and his companions’ personal acquaintance. Mr. Rassam has been sent by the British Government with the view of effecting the liberation of Mr. Cameron, Consul at Massowah, and was at the same time ordered by the Queen to endeavour to set the captive missionaries and other Europeans at liberty. Mr. Rassam is a prudent and kind man, and by great precaution and patience he has so far perfectly succeeded. The King has delivered all the liberated prisoners into his hands, saying that he did it for the sake of friendship between England and Abyssinia; to which he added :—“ The friendship between Abyssinia and England has been disturbed by the Europeans who came to my land with the devil in their hearts, who abused me, speaking all kinds of evil against me; but now the Great Queen of England having sent a great man—Mr. Rassam—to me with a friendly letter, I have set Mr. Cameron and all the Europeans at liberty, desiring a cordial and solid reconciliation.”

“ ‘ Last week there was a kind of assize in Mr. Rassam’s tent, at the order of the King, to which we of Gaffat, that is, Flad and our brethren, together with the liberated prisoners, were called. The written accusations of the

King against Captain Cameron, M. Bardel, and the missionaries, Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal, were publicly read; upon which the accused confessed their guilt before the whole audience. Mr. Stern, especially, said in the name of all of them, "We have done wrong against the King, and we have received our just reward. We thank the King (who was not present) for having pardoned us, and we pray to God that He may prolong the life of his Majesty, prosper his kingdom, and subdue his enemies under him." This closed the judicial conference, and its result was communicated to the King, who expressed his joy and satisfaction."

The remainder of Mr. Waldmeier's letter is immaterial to the present question, and therefore will not be quoted here.

The insertion of this letter (which even on the editor's own showing was hardly justifiable) brought the following reply from Mr. Purday, Mr. Stern's father-in-law, which appeared in the same paper on the 21st of the same month, addressed to the editor:—

"In your Supplement to the 'Record' of Wednesday last, July 11th, you publish 'Extracts from a letter to Bishop Gobat' from one of the good Bishop's artisan missionaries in Abyssinia, Mr. Waldmeier, on which you very properly remark, 'We undertake no responsibility for the truth of the contents.' Now, Sir, as the natural guardian of Mr. Stern's family in his unfortunate absence, I feel called upon to make some comments on these 'Extracts,' and I do so the more readily as I am in possession of the facts of the case. Mr. Waldmeier says, that 'a sort of assize was held in Mr. Rassam's tent, when written

accusations were read against Consul Cameron, Monsieur Bardel, and the missionaries, Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal.' As one proof of the accuracy of this statement, I am told *by an eye and ear witness*, that Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal's names were not even mentioned, nor did they make any '*confession of their guilt.*' My informant also adds that Mr. Stern never used the words put into his mouth, '*We have received our just reward*'*, or anything that might be construed into such an idea. Mr. Stern was put forward as the organ of the captives and other Europeans to say what was necessary, and Mr. Waldmeier, who was present, readily assented to what was said. Mr. Stern spoke in English, that he might not be misunderstood by those who understood that language, and what he did say was literally translated into Amharic for the benefit of the Abyssinians present, and was to the following effect:—'That they all regretted having used any expressions that were considered derogatory to the dignity of His Majesty the King of Abyssinia; and they all most humbly begged His Majesty's pardon for their offence, thanking His Majesty at the same time for his most gracious pardon, and praying, that the King may be blessed with long life and prosperity in his kingdom.' I can only hope, therefore, that those who have requested these statements to be circulated against Mr. Stern behind his back, have done so in ignorance of the facts, and with no motive of ill will against that long-suffering and ill-used missionary."

I have thought it best to let the case be stated by

* All these italics are Mr. Purday's. I am told that this "eye and ear witness" was Mr. Flad, who acted as interpreter on the occasion.

the parties themselves, and so to leave it; with this single word of comment only, that I believe Mr. Waldmeier's intention, in writing as he did, was not to injure Mr. Stern, but simply to cry up that "great man—Mr. Rassam," who was then in the ascendant, and whose departure, "together with those to whom he had been a saviour,"—to use Mr. Waldmeier's fulsome and unseemly language—he and his companions were for various reasons most anxious to accelerate.

As regards Mr. Rassam, of whom I would wish to speak with every consideration, it appears to me, as it will doubtless be apparent to most of the readers of these pages, that when he made to Government his communication of March 22nd last, of which an abstract has been here given, he entertained the firm conviction that he was on the eve of his departure from Abyssinia in triumph with the liberated captives. It was therefore only natural that he should announce beforehand the circumstances under which their liberation had been effected; and it would doubtless have been regarded by his employers, and even by the public, as a venial fault, if in doing so he should have represented matters in the light most favourable to himself, and likewise to the British Government, whose agent he was, and whose exoneration from blame was as much an object of his mission as the deliverance of the prisoners themselves.

Had success crowned his efforts, all would have been well. The statement attributed to the Emperor that the friendship of England towards him had been proved by Mr. Rassam's "patience and good conduct," would not merely have been allowed to pass unquestioned, but

would have been accepted as his complete exoneration from blame on account of his delay at Massowah; and his "good conduct," and yet more his ingenuity, would no doubt have entitled him to a rich reward.

The truth¹ of the Emperor's alleged charges against Consul Cameron and the missionaries no one would probably have cared to dispute except the parties concerned. And what could they have said or done?

It would have availed Mr. Stern and Mr. Rosenthal but little had they attempted to explain that the *effect* was made the *cause*—the cart truly put before the horse; that what they had written would never have become known to the Emperor and his spies, but for the unfortunate position in which they and the other Europeans were placed in consequence of the Emperor's quarrel with the representative of the British Government; and that it was, besides, intended for their own private use only. They would have been told by all, even by their friends, that they had erred in not following the advice of the Preacher, "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber"*; and they would have been told further, and would no doubt themselves have felt, that they had only too much reason to be deeply grateful for their final deliverance, by whatever means, from their protracted captivity, and that under the circumstances the best thing for them to do would be to follow Earl Russell's excellent advice, and to "rest and be thankful." Added to which, the feeling of the injustice done them would by degrees have worn off, when compensated, and more than compen-

* Eccles. x. 20.

sated, by their restoration to the arms of their families, and by the sympathy and regard of their admiring friends and well-wishers.

For Consul Cameron, the inducement to hold his tongue and take on himself the blame of all he has done or not done as the agent of Government, is one which is infallible in cases of the sort. Notwithstanding the displeasure of Her Majesty's Government incurred by that officer on account of his visit to Bogos*; of the general disapproval of his proceedings in Abyssinia formally communicated to him by Earl Russell†, of the stoppage of his pay and allowances for upwards of two years, and of the obloquy which has been so repeatedly cast on him within the walls of Parliament and without, it has been intimated by Earl Russell in his despatch to Colonel Stanton, of October 5th, 1865, that all the delinquent's imputed offences are condoned; for that "he

* See page 95.

† See pages 104 and 122. In page 129 it is stated that in the beginning of January 1864, when arrangements had nearly been made for Mr. Flad's departure with letters to procure machines and gunpowder-makers, Consul Cameron applied for leave to go to his post at Massowah in pursuance of orders from the British Government. Those orders, which through an oversight were omitted to be inserted in their proper place, are here given. They were contained in the following despatch from Earl Russell:—

"Foreign Office, September 8th, 1863.

"SIR,—I have received from Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General in Egypt your despatches of the 20th May last; and I have to state to you that *Her Majesty's Government do not approve your proceedings in Abyssinia*, nor your suggestions founded upon them.

"I have only to desire that you will abstain from all interference in the internal affairs of that country, and that you will remain at your post at Massowah, whither you were ordered by my despatch of the 22nd of April last, to return and reside.

"I am, &c.,

"RUSSELL."

will be employed hereafter in a different part of the world, and will never have occasion to return to Abyssinia"*.

Whether this tardy retribution will ever avail anything to that much ill-used man is very questionable. Still it is to be hoped that it afforded some consolation in her agony to his aged mother (the widow of Colonel Cameron, late of the Buffs), who, worn out by care and anxiety for her beloved son, breathed her last on the morning of November 2nd, 1865, the day after this virtual vindication of his character had appeared in all the newspapers.

Unfortunately the elaborate fabric raised with so much care and ingenuity has fallen to the ground, like a house built by a child with a pack of cards; and "the Abyssinian Question," which it was attempted to cover and hide from the public sight, stands exposed in all its naked hideousness. Mr. Steiger, writing from Gaffat in December 1864, went to the core of the matter when he said, "*We are state prisoners, and shall probably remain such until the political differences between England and the King of Abyssinia come to a satisfactory conclusion*"†: after the second imprisonment of all the captives, together with Mr. Rassam himself, in July 1866, as will have to be related‡, that gentleman, when communicating the sad intelligence to Her Majesty's Government, could hardly have expressed himself differently.

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 63.

† 'Record,' Sept. 6, 1865.

‡ See page 234.

CHAPTER XIII.

THEODORE'S ANSWER TO THE QUEEN—A MOCKERY—WRITTEN FOR HIM—HIS LETTERS TO THE AUTHOR—CAPTIVES START FROM KORATA—STOPPED—MR. RASSAM AND ALL CHAINED—MR. FLAD SENT TO ENGLAND—BAD NEWS CONCEALED—CAUSE OF DETENTION—DEPARTURE WITHOUT LEAVE—MR. RASSAM OBJECTS TO REMAIN ALONE—DR. BLANC OFFERS TO STAY WITH HIM—MR. RASSAM'S DETENTION PREDICTED BY THE AUTHOR—DANGER OF DETENTION.

AFTER what has been related in the preceding Chapter, it seems almost a mockery to give the conclusion of Mr. Rassam's report. It is in these words:—"Further, the Emperor ordered the translation of Her Majesty's letter and his answer thereto to be read publicly by the chief scribe. Then all heard what had been written in his letter. In the letter His Majesty asks that what has been done may be forgiven, and says, 'In my humble position I am not worthy to address your Majesty; but illustrious princes and the deep ocean can bear anything. I, being an ignorant Ethiopian, hope that your Majesty will overlook my shortcomings and pardon my offences;' and the letter ends thus:—"Counsel me, but do not blame me, Queen, whose Majesty God has glorified, and to whom He has given abundance of wisdom.'"

At the moment when this letter to our Queen was written, Theodore was for a certainty in right good humour, and ready to say or do anything that would please Mr. Rassam as Her Britannic Majesty's representative. But it needs scarcely be said that the words of humility thus

imputed to him did not come from the heart of the arrogant and self-sufficient "King of Kings," who has of late dropped the qualifying words "of Ethiopia," as derogatory to his transcendent dignity*. It may indeed be doubted whether those words ever issued from his lips. The expressions are hardly such as he would make use of; and the probability is, that, as great people often do in countries nearer home, he said to Mr. Rassam or some person in his confidence, "There, you write whatever you think right and proper, and I will sign it,"—or, in his case, "I will put my seal to it."

I have myself a letter *in English* from the Emperor, with his seal affixed, dated May 28th, 1866, which I feel quite convinced never had an Amharic original, but was indited by Mr. Rassam †, and sealed with the Emperor's seal,—he troubling himself little about the contents, or at all events placing implicit confidence not only in the writer, but likewise in the individuals through whom those contents would have been made known to him—namely, first Mr. Rassam's Mohammedan interpreter, and then Samuel, the Emperor's steward.

A copy of this second letter is given in the Appendix, together with a translation of the former one, written in reply to mine from Massowah forwarding the petition from the relatives of the captives. The Emperor's first letter was written in Amharic, unaccompanied by any translation into English, and must consequently be re-

* See his proclamation in page 125, and his two letters to myself in the Appendix.

† I believe the handwriting to be that of Lieut. Prideaux.

garded as having emanated directly from himself. Singularly enough, it is in the hand-writing of two persons,—the one being the Emperor's secretary, who wrote the body of the letter, but was not scholar enough to fill in the date, which had to be done by a second person—namely, some learned *debtora* or scribe.

I have already mentioned* how favourably the petition to the Emperor was received by him. As regards his sincerity, it is not here the place to say anything. All that is now necessary is to repeat the communication made to me on the subject from Mr. Rassam through M. Munzinger. "Mr. Rassam," writes the latter gentleman, "begs me to say to you, 'The letter he (Dr. Beke) sent to the Emperor arrived on the 15th ult. ; and the day after His Majesty received it he sent it to me to read with the petition from the relatives of the prisoners. I believe the Emperor wishes to consult me about the answer when I go to see him this week ; and I have no doubt that Dr. Beke's messenger will be dismissed when we leave the Court. In that case I shall send a messenger with him to inform you of our departure hence to Matamma and Kassala. I told them (the messengers) to bring no letters from you to my address.'"

This communication from Mr. Rassam was dated April 9th, 1866, at which time everything bore the most gratifying appearance. The messenger who brought Mr. Rassam's letter to M. Munzinger was the bearer also of despatches to Colonel Merewether, who happened to arrive at Massowah in the 'Victoria' on May 11th,

* See page 151.

on his way to Suez, and thus was enabled to carry the good news on with him.

It was immediately reported to England by the Consul-General in Egypt, and, as usual with all favourable (though not with unfavourable) intelligence, it was instantly communicated by Mr. Layard to the newspapers in the following terms:—"Colonel Stanton reports from Alexandria, by a telegram dated Tuesday, that letters had arrived from Mr. Rassam, dated Koráta, April 9th, all well; and that later intelligence had been received at Massowah, according to which Mr. Rassam had crossed the lake to take leave of the King, while the late prisoners had gone on to Górgora, at the north end of the lake, where Mr. Rassam would join them, and the whole party would then proceed to Matamma."

This appeared in public on May 23rd; and the next intelligence to be expected naturally was that the whole party had reached the coast, and were on their way to England.

Little more than a month afterwards, however, rumours were afloat of an unfavourable nature; and on application being made to the Foreign Office for information, the following circular letter, dated July 4th, was addressed by Mr. Murray to the relatives of the several captives, and was inserted by Mr. Purday, Mr. Stern's father-in-law, in the 'Times' of July 6th:—"I am directed by the Earl of Clarendon to inform you that a telegram has been received from Colonel Stanton, dated Alexandria the 29th ult., stating that Mr. Flad had arrived in that town, and was on the point of embarking in the French steamer for this country, being the bearer of despatches. The

Europeans had not left Abyssinia, but were well treated, the object of the King being, as is stated, to procure an assurance of good disposition towards him before the Europeans departed. Mr. Flad on his arrival will doubtless be able to explain how matters stand."

Three days afterwards Mr. Flad arrived in London, bringing despatches from Mr. Rassam to Government, and letters from the captives to their respective relations. From these letters, as well as from Mr. Flad himself; very little was to be learned, as may be best evidenced by the following letter from Mr. Stern to his wife:—

" Royal Camp, Zággye, Lake Tsana, April 19th, 1866.

" MY DEAR CHARLOTTE,—Your petition, together with that of the relatives of my companions, duly reached His Majesty, and at his own request was read to us on the 17th ultimo.

" His Majesty was graciously pleased to give it the kindest consideration, and assured us that the day was not far distant when we would again behold those we loved.

" We have received a full pardon for all our past offences, on account of the King's love to the Queen of England and his high regard and esteem for Mr. Rassam. We are exceedingly grateful for this favour; and in the hallowed anticipation of meeting once more those whose life and happiness are bound up with my own,

" I am ever your affectionate husband,

" HENRY A. STERN."

This letter was sent by Mr. Purday to the 'Times,' and inserted in that paper on July 14th, with the following observations from Mr. Purday himself:—" In sending you this letter, I cannot but remark on its style, which

is so different from anything Mr. Stern has hitherto written, that all his family conclude it must have been penned under restraint, and therefore cannot be considered as the spontaneous expression of the mind of this ill-used and much misrepresented man*. I may add that we now know for a fact, that Mr. Rassam (as well as the captives) is detained a prisoner until Mr. Flad, who has just arrived with despatches to the British Government, carries back to the Emperor a favourable reply."

The letters from the other captives were in a similar tone. Mr. Rassam had evidently induced them to keep silent on all that had just occurred, and to continue the same mischievous course of "making things pleasant" before the public, by concealing or perverting the real facts. As is manifest, this system of deceit is quite gratuitous, because sooner or later the truth *must* come out. But perhaps Mr. Rassam—or rather his employers, for I should be sorry to impute anything to him personally, where he was merely following orders—may be of the same mind as a certain great agitator, who was not very particular as to the truth of what he asserted, and who, when asked by a friend what could be the use of saying publicly what he knew would be contradicted as publicly the next day, replied, "Ah, my good friend, you don't know the value of a lie sometimes, if only for a quarter of an hour!"

However, in spite of all these attempts, it was not long in oozing out that on July 13th, only four days after the date of Mr. Rassam's most favourable report,

* In a subsequent letter to his wife, dated May 26th, Mr. Stern says, "You will of course have taken my last letter for what it was worth."

and after the captives had left Koráta for Górgora, as had been announced in Colonel Stanton's telegram of May 22nd*, they were to their astonishment suddenly arrested, fettered, and taken to Zágye, where *the whole of them, together with Mr. Rassam and his companions, remained in chains for five days.*

The cause of this treatment of Mr. Rassam and the liberated captives, and of Mr. Flad's mission to England, has been thus related to me.

At the last moment, when everything had been arranged between the Emperor and Mr. Rassam as to the terms of a fresh treaty to be entered into between Abyssinia and England† and for the departure of the released prisoners, His Majesty desired that before starting they should all cross over from Koráta to Zágye to take leave of him personally—his object being that they might be reconciled to each other through the intervention of an *astáraki* (peace-maker or mediator) according to the custom of the country, as has been explained in a former Chapter ‡. Of course Mr. Rassam himself would

* See page 220.

† Mr. Waldmeier writes, under date of March 20th last, "It is possible, as Mr. Rassam tells me, that in consequence of some treaty between England and Abyssinia, there may be more liberty for Europeans to come to Abyssinia and leave it again at pleasure."—'Record,' July 11, 1866.

‡ Chapter III., pages 114, 115. The following incident serves to show the great importance the Abyssinians attach to this reconciliation through a mediator. Indeed, they never "make it up" otherwise.

Whilst my wife and I were at 'Mkullu near Massowah, being most anxious to leave the coast, we arranged with Kántiba Walda Georgis of Halai to accompany him to his place, upon his representation that he was the *shum* of the Emperor Theodore, and that if the "rebels" should approach he would see to our safe return

have been the *ástáraki*. With this usage that gentleman would appear not to have been acquainted; and fearing that ill might result from the desired interview, he took on himself to send the captives off to Górgora on

to the coast or wherever else we might wish to go. As Walda Georgis was well known to M. Munzinger, with whom he had business transactions, we believed we might trust him. But before reaching Halai we learned that he had recently gone over to the "rebels;" and we found that his object was to extort money by frightening us with them, and so inducing us to require his help to get away.

It is unnecessary to enter into the details of his iniquitous conduct, which ended in his getting a petty chief to arrest us at Halai, as is explained in my letter of April 3rd to the Emperor, given in the Appendix. These details will be narrated elsewhere; and all that needs be said here is, that the Kántiba and I became bitter enemies, and that he did all in his power to injure me by reporting in Massowah that I was sending messengers to the "rebels," when in fact I was secretly corresponding with Dedjatj Tekla Georgis, the Emperor's lieutenant in Tigre, and with the Emperor himself.

A few days before the arrival of the good news from Mr. Rassam of April 9th, which caused us to quit Abyssinia, the Kántiba had occasion to go to Massowah, but he could not leave Halai without being reconciled to us. At first I refused to have anything to say to him; but I was so importuned that at length I allowed a native priest, who had been educated at Rome, to act as our mediator. Not content with being reconciled to myself, Walda Georgis was most urgent that my wife should also be a party; and as she was within our tent, and not inclined to see him or even to pardon him for his infamous conduct, I had to say in her name what she would not say herself.

After this reconciliation at the hand of a Christian mediator and with his conscience thereby lightened, Kántiba Walda Georgis went down to Massowah, and there became a renegade, the rising power of Egypt in Northern Abyssinia convincing him that it would be more to his worldly advantage to be a Mohammedan than a Christian.

Thus it was easier for him to renounce the "one Mediator between God and men," than to forego the supposed benefit of a human mediator between man and man!

Since my return to England, I have been informed that Walda Georgis—I do not know his Moslem name—died of cholera at Massowah not long after his apostacy.

their way home. The consequence was, that the Emperor suspected, as under the circumstances was not unnatural, that Mr. Rassam wished to get them out of the country, and then to decamp himself; to which he put an effectual stop, by sending a body of soldiers after them with manacles, to bring them all back to his camp at Záyge, Mr. Rassam and his party being fettered in like manner. It was not till after the lapse of five days that the Emperor was appeased and a reconciliation took place, the European artisans doubtless acting as mediators; upon which the chains of all were removed;—though they were no longer allowed to have their liberty as they had had at Koráta, but were confined within the Emperor's "court."

I have heard that, notwithstanding all this, the liberated captives might still have been permitted to quit the country, had Mr. Rassam consented to remain behind as a hostage for the fulfilment of the treaty on the part of the British Government and their compliance with the Emperor's other requests; but that that gentleman objected to the departure of the Europeans without him, though Dr. Blanc volunteered to remain behind with him, provided the other Europeans might leave in charge of Lieut. Prideaux.

From the well-known character of the monarch, it was to be anticipated that he would not allow everybody to leave him till he had got all he wanted; and consequently, even if the liberated prisoners had "made it up" with him before attempting to go as they did, the result would have been much the same. It is in no spirit of vain-glory that I say that, had I been permitted to undertake

the liberation of the captives, I was quite prepared for this emergency, as was my wife likewise; and the proof that I am not speaking *ex post facto*, is in a letter which I wrote from Halai on April 27th, when everything promised so well for the success of Mr. Rassam's mission, and which, after the good news of April 9th had reached me, I forwarded nevertheless to the nobleman to whom it was addressed, adding merely a postscript dated May 12th, to the effect that, notwithstanding that good news, I still retained the same opinion.

In that letter I said, "The reports of Mr. Rassam's proceedings are most favourable, and if only they are to be depended on, we may expect soon to witness the arrival at Massowah of our Consul and the rest of the unfortunate Europeans who have so long been in chains. But, even supposing the Emperor to have thus promptly responded to Her Majesty's letter, there is yet a contingency which may arise. Mr. Rassam will, doubtless, have entered into engagements on behalf of Her Majesty's Government; and the Abyssinian monarch may be suspicious as to the non-fulfilment of those engagements when once Mr. Rassam and the prisoners are beyond his reach. He may therefore insist on retaining a hostage for the fulfilment of those engagements, and if so, whom so likely as Mr. Rassam himself? Without discussing the rights of the matter, I will merely say that native Abyssinians of intelligence, who know Theodore's character well, assure me that nothing is more probable."

The foregoing extract from my letter of April 27th was inserted by me in the 'Times' of July 8th, accompanied by the following remarks:—"The case thus imagined

upwards of two months ago has unhappily now become a fact, but under circumstances far more aggravated than I had contemplated. Mr. Flad, one of the captives, is on his way to England with despatches from Mr. Rassam, containing certain proposals from the Emperor Theodore to the British Government; and it is said that, until a favourable answer to these proposals is received, Her Majesty's Envoy is to be detained with the remainder of the 'liberated' captives; so that, under no circumstances, can their departure from Abyssinia be expected till 'after the rains'—that is to say, next September or October. We have the assurance, however, that during the interval they are to be 'well treated.' Well did M. de Lesseps put the case, when we were discussing the subject together at Alexandria on my way home:—"His Abyssinian Majesty," said he, "imprisons his enemies and detains his friends."

This detention is most disastrous. Mr. Waldmeier, in his letter of March 20th, to which allusion has already been made*, when speaking of Mr. Rassam and the released captives, remarked significantly and almost ominously:—"It would be a dangerous thing if they were obliged to spend the rainy season in this country. I fear, in that case, that the peace and friendship which have been so wisely restored by Mr. Rassam might suffer, which would be most painful to us. We shall, therefore, do our utmost to forward Mr. Rassam's departure, together with those to whom he has been a saviour, with all possible speed."

Dangerous as their passing the rainy season in that

* See page 209.

country seemed to one so competent to judge, at a moment when all was fair and promising, they have now unfortunately had to do so under circumstances such as Mr. Waldmeier could not then have contemplated. If the peace and friendship which Mr. Rassam was said to have restored were nevertheless likely to be endangered whilst all the Europeans were at liberty and able to occupy and amuse themselves as best pleased them, how much more is this to be dreaded now that they have all been cooped up together at Magdala during the rainy season of 1866, as the "captives" were during that of 1865.

It must now be added, that as Mr. Flad did not leave England on his return to Abyssinia till October 9th, when the rainy season had terminated and the Abyssinian new year had begun, it can hardly be before the beginning of our new year, under the most favourable circumstances, that we may expect to know the result of his mission.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHANGE OF MINISTRY—LORD STANLEY'S ALTERNATIVE—PEACE OR WAR—FORMER DECIDED ON—OBJECT OF MR. FLAD'S MISSION—"MACHINES AND GUNPOWDER-MAKERS"—GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE—MACHINERY ORDERED—MR. TALBOT AND SIX WORKMEN ENGAGED—MR. FLAD SEES THE QUEEN—HER MAJESTY WRITES AGAIN TO THEODORE—INSISTS ON LIBERATION OF THE CAPTIVES—LATER INTELLIGENCE—ALL SENT PRISONERS TO MAGDALA—CAUSE—EVIL REPORTS—RAILROAD FROM SUWÁKIN TO KASSALA—ARTICLES IN NEWSPAPERS—EGYPTIANS AT MASSOWAH AND ON THE FRONTIERS—DEPARTURE OF MR. FLAD—OF MR. TALBOT AND WORKMEN—OF COLONEL MEREWETHER—TO AWAIT ARRIVAL OF MR. FLAD AND CAPTIVES BEFORE GOING ON—THE AUTHOR'S PRESENTS GIVEN OVER—ABYSSINIAN CAPTIVES LIBERATION FUND—ELECTRIC TELEGRAPH—REGENERATION OF ABYSSINIA.

THE calamitous intelligence of Mr. Rassam's first disaster arrived in England at an inauspicious moment. Earl Russell's Administration had just broken up, leaving to their successors in office a *damnosa hæreditas* in this unhappy Abyssinian Question. Most difficult must it have been for Lord Stanley, immediately on entering on his duties at the Foreign Office, to decide on any course of action with a reasonable prospect of success. Under the circumstances, it would seem that he had only this alternative:—either to comply as far as practicable with the Emperor Theodore's demands, as intimated by him to Mr. Rassam and agreed to by the latter as the Agent of Government; or else to repudiate all that Mr. Rassam had done, and at once adopt violent measures against that Sovereign—that is to say, go to war with him.

Having decided on the former course, the next thing was to act on it promptly and energetically. The fact was that Mr. Flad's projected mission to Europe in the beginning of January 1864, "with letters to procure machines and one or two gunpowder-makers"*, which had been nipped in the bud by the inopportune arrival of Earl Russell's despatch of September 1863†, was now revived on an enlarged scale, Mr. Flad having brought with him £2000—said to be in bills drawn by Mr. Rassam against the amount of the Emperor's present, which he had placed to the credit of Her Majesty's Government‡—for the purchase of the machines and other articles required.

To enable him to fulfil his mission in this respect, Mr. Flad required the assistance of Government, which seems to have been given very fairly—not so liberally perhaps as Mr. Flad himself desired, but still on the whole very fairly. The machinery and other articles required by the Emperor were immediately put in hand; and the services of Mr. Talbot, a Civil Engineer, were secured for three years at a salary of £1000 per annum, together with those of six workmen of various kinds. They are all to be paid by the Emperor Theodore, *but under the guarantee of the British Government*, without which it is not likely that any of them would have agreed to go.

Mr. Flad was further commissioned to see the Queen in person, and to obtain from Her Majesty *another* letter under the Royal Sign Manual, the former "civil answer"

* See page 128, and Mr. Stern's letter in the Appendix.

† See pages 129 and 215, *note*.

‡ See page 200.

of May 1864* not being sufficient. Accordingly Mr. Flad went to Osborne on Tuesday, August 14th, when, as was announced in the 'Court Circular,' "Lord Stanley had an audience of the Queen, after which he presented to Her Majesty the Rev. John Flad, lately detained in Abyssinia. Mr. Flad, whose family remains in that country, is about to return there under instructions to effect, if possible, the release of the remaining prisoners."

Her Majesty has further been pleased to address a second letter to Her "Good Friend," which has been entrusted to Mr. Flad to deliver. The purport of this letter is understood to be that, whilst complying as far as possible with all the Emperor Theodore's requests, Her Majesty demands the immediate liberation of Mr. Rassam, Consul Cameron, the missionaries, and all the Europeans who may be desirous of quitting Abyssinia. And the Queen makes it a condition that all those persons shall arrive either at Matamma or at Massowah, before Mr. Talbot and the workmen, together with the machinery and presents, will be allowed to pass the Abyssinian frontier.

But before the preparations could be made for Mr. Flad's departure, communications were received from the captives in Abyssinia on two separate occasions, which must be more particularly alluded to. The first was in the beginning of August, and brought news to the end of May, when everything appeared to be going on tolerably well. The following particulars were published in the 'Jewish Intelligence' for October 1st, page 256:—
"Information has been received concerning the con-

* See pages 139, 155, and 183.

dition of the missionaries and their companions on to May 26th; all were well and happy. The King's kindness and liberality to Mr. Rassam are spoken of in the highest terms. He has even visited him upon two occasions in his private tent. The King also provided food and wine for the whole party, to celebrate the anniversary of the Queen's birthday. The National Anthem was sung with all honours, though not perhaps quite so cheerfully as it would have been at home. As a special mark of the King's consideration for the Queen of England, a salute of twenty-one guns* was fired upon the occasion. The caution and wisdom of Mr. Rassam are highly commended; and we sincerely hope and earnestly pray that it may lead, on the return of Mr. Flad, to the final deliverance of all. Mr. Flad, sent over by the King upon a special mission, has been most graciously received by Her Majesty at Osborne House, with expressions of sympathy for the sufferings which had been endured during the months of captivity. The Government are using their best endeavours to comply with the requests of the King, and to secure for our brethren and their companions the long waited for permission to leave the country. We ask our friends, in their name and in our own, to continue to remember them in their prayers."

The periodical in which the foregoing particulars appeared is the organ of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews, whose Missionaries Messrs. Stern and Rosenthal are, and it is published (if I mistake not) under the supervision of Captain Layard, the lay Secretary of the Society. I do not know

* One four-pounder fired off 21 times.

from what source Captain Layard obtained his information that the missionaries and their companions were all "well and happy;" but I must confess that such was not the impression made on my mind by the following letter from Mr. Stern himself, received at the same time as the information so reported by Captain Layard, than which it is of two days' later date.

"Zágye, Lake Tsana, Abyssinia, May 28th, 1866.

"MY DEAR DR. BEKE,—Little did you or I anticipate, when we last met in London, that I should be a prisoner and you the good Samaritan to come to my own and others' release. A Turk would say it was *kismet*, but a Christian sees in it the finger of God and the proceedings of an inscrutable Providence.

"You have probably heard lots of strange stories about my grievous offences; but, believe me, if an angel from Heaven had been placed in my position, he would not, *after certain occurrences on which I must not dilate*, have got unscathed out of this country. Thanks to Him who is with His servants in the tempest and fire, and who has also almost visibly been with me, and afforded me strength according to my day.

"Our future is still enveloped in mystery. We have been released from our fetters, and enjoy once more the use of our unshackled limbs. When we shall be permitted to leave Abyssinia is still problematical. I have become a regular soured sceptic, and do not worry my mind about visionary prospects, which till now have always turned out to be phantoms of an excited imagination, or merely soap-bubbles.

“His Majesty, is ‘kind’* to us, and we hope that his favours will not diminish. Our whole party are tolerably well, and very likely when the camp moves we shall find in active exercise something to relieve our distracting suspense. I am thankful that my family are well. His Majesty was deeply moved by the petition you forwarded, and he has also written a gracious reply to the relatives of the captives †.

“We have heard wonderful accounts of Mrs. Beke’s hunting exploits. Please to give her my best Christian regards, and accept also the same for yourself.

“That our Heavenly Father may be with you and us is the prayer of

“Yours in the bonds of trouble and gratitude,

“*Charles Beke, Esq.*”

“H. A. STERN.”

In a foot-note to the information published in the ‘*Jewish Intelligence*,’ Captain Layard adds, “We regret to have to state that more recent letters from Abyssinia give a less favourable account of the condition of the captives, who had been sent up to the fortress of Magdala under a strong escort.”

This was putting in the mildest possible form the sad intelligence which had already been published by Mr. Flad himself in the ‘*Times*’ of September 26th, that the captives had all again fallen under the Emperor’s displeasure, in consequence of reports brought to him by some evil-disposed persons, and that they had all, toge-

* So marked by Mr. Stern.

† The Emperor’s letter to myself is given in the Appendix; but no answer to their petition has been received by any of the relatives of the captives.

ther with Mr. Rassam and his party, been sent again to prison at Amba Magdala. I have since learned what gave rise to the Emperor's displeasure.

It having been reported to him by some evil-disposed persons that an English company had contracted with the Pasha of Egypt to construct a railroad from Suwákin to Kassala, for the conveyance of troops to the latter place with a view to the invasion of Abyssinia, he called together all the Europeans to hear the statements made to him on the subject, and thereupon broke out into a violent rage with the English, and ordered all the liberated captives, together with Mr. Rassam and his suite, to be taken to Magdala. His anger against them was the greater, in consequence of his having been at the same time informed that some of the Europeans had abused him in the English newspapers, especially Dr. Blanc and Mr. Rosenthal, with whom he was in a terrific passion. Poor Mrs. Rosenthal was so frightened on account of her husband as to be taken seriously ill; but Dr. Blanc having been allowed to attend her, notwithstanding the Emperor's anger against him, the anticipated evil consequences of her illness were averted.

The Emperor then ordered the *Fetha Negest*—the law of the country founded on the Roman Civil Law—to be referred to, and the texts to be read condemning the captives for their alleged offences; and he then confiscated everything they possessed, not omitting the presents he had himself given them. They were then given over into the hands of the Frenchman, M. Bardel, who was charged to see them all safely lodged at Amba Magdala. The members of the Scottish Mission were, as

before, sent to work at Gaffat, with Mr. Waldmeier and the other European workmen, Mrs. Flad and Mrs. Rosenthal being given into the charge of the latter.

The substantial correctness of what is thus stated may be depended on; and there can be little doubt that M. Bardel himself, into whose charge the prisoners were given, was one of the "evil-disposed persons" to whose machinations they owe their misfortune. Time will show who were his coadjutors in this work of infamy.

As to the report of the contemplated construction of a railway from Suwákin to Kassala, for the purpose of conveying Egyptian troops to invade Abyssinia, it may possibly be a misrepresentation of the idea which has recently been entertained in some quarters, of forming such a communication between the Nile and the Red Sea at Cosseir or Berenice, as a more direct means of transporting British troops to and from India. Or it may be the renewal of a *French* project for running a railway from Suwákin to Berber on the Nile, which has long been entertained, and was even countenanced by some of the predecessors of the present Pasha of Egypt, though I am not aware of any steps having actually been taken to carry it into execution.

I cannot, however, imagine that this French scheme alone could have served as a pretext for the misrepresentation made to the Emperor Théodore, though, coupled with the circumstances I am about to relate, it might without difficulty have been wrested so as to injure Mr. Rassam and his party.

In page 88 of the present work allusion is made to a letter which I addressed on March 31st, 1852, to Lord

Colchester, then Vice-President of the Board of Trade, "On the Cultivation of Cotton in Taka and Northern Abyssinia;" which letter concluded in the following terms:—"In the new circumstances which are now presented to the notice of Her Majesty's Government, I take the liberty of repeating the representations which I had the honour of making in my letter of the 5th of March, 1849, to Sir Denis Le Marchant*, and of most strongly urging the importance of establishing a commercial Factory^o in the way and for the purposes suggested. And, in conclusion, I will only remark that, even were such a Factory established solely with a view to the opening up of a trade in Cotton with the regions which gave birth to the 'Ethiopian' or 'Mahò' cotton of Egypt, *so as to secure to our manufacturers a supply of that most valuable, and indeed indispensable, article from an independent source*, the national advantages accruing from such a measure would most assuredly far more than compensate any reasonable expense that might thereby be incurred by Her Majesty's Government."

Without pretending to any great amount of prescience, I felt convinced in my own mind at that remote period (1852), that before many years elapsed events would be such as to check, if not altogether to stop, the supply of Cotton from North America; and several of my friends in England will remember how, during my residence in Mauritius between the years 1853 and 1860, I wrote to them in that sense, and got laughed at by them for my supposed nonsense!

Towards the end of 1860 I returned to England, and,

* See page 87.

my prognostication having unhappily been verified, I addressed a letter to the Editor of the 'Times' which appeared in that journal on January 22nd, 1861, calling public attention to the remarkable fact that the increase in the production of Cotton was far more rapid in Egypt since the introduction of the seed from "Ethiopia," than it had been in North America in the first years of its growth there, wonderful as the latter was*. On June 11th of the same year, I spoke to the same effect at the Annual Meeting of the Cotton Supply Association at Manchester, and proposed to put down £1000 for the establishment of a Factory, such as had been proposed in my letter to Sir Denis Le Marchant twelve years previously, if twenty-four persons would join me with a like sum each, which proposal of mine is mentioned by Mr. Stern in page 321 of his book, 'Wanderings among the Falashas of Abyssinia.'

Nothing resulted however from all my exertions. But on speaking shortly afterwards on the subject to my old and valued friend, the late Admiral Washington, who had always interested himself most deeply in the amelioration of Africa generally, as well as in my own personal labours in Abyssinia from the very outset, he represented to me that it was useless to hope for any one to embark in commercial speculations in that country, because it was not yet ripe for the public, but that, were I to propose anything on Egyptian ground, he thought there might be a better chance of success.

I was then on the point of proceeding into Syria with

* This argument is reproduced at greater length in the 'Proposal for a Tramroad,' &c., printed in the Appendix.

my wife on our "Pilgrimage to Harran"*; and as on our way we had to go to Egypt, I drew up the "Proposal for a Tramroad between the Cotton Fields of Ethiopia and the Coast of the Red Sea," which is given in the Appendix to the present work, and had some copies printed for distribution among my friends in Egypt and otherwise for my private use. I never went further however than a limited distribution of these copies.

A copy of that document was enclosed in the letter which I addressed to the Secretary of the Board of Trade on November 3rd, 1862, and was by him forwarded to the Foreign Office; and I fear that the same, together with several other of my original communications, was, in the beginning of 1863, most inopportunately transmitted by Earl Russell to Consul Cameron to report thereon, as is stated in page 88. Should this printed "Proposal" have been found among Consul Cameron's papers, it would have been quite sufficient for evil-disposed persons to build thereon a tale of the construction by an English Company of a railway from Suwákin to Taka, not for the legitimate purposes of trade, but for the conveyance of Egyptian troops, with a view to the conquest of Abyssinia.

As to Dr. Blanc and Mr. Rosenthal's having inserted articles in the English newspapers abusing the Emperor, it is nothing but a malicious calumny patent to all the world, inasmuch as no such articles ever had any existence except in the mind of the slanderer. Had it been

* Mrs. Beke has since published a narrative of our journey, under the title of 'Jacob's Flight; or a Pilgrimage to Harran, and thence in the Patriarch's Footsteps into the Promised Land.'

said that Earl Russell's ill-advised despatch of October 5th, 1865, to Colonel Stanton had been brought to the Emperor's notice, it might have been believed, because, when at Massowah, I was informed that that despatch, which was published in the 'London Gazette' of October 31st and thence copied into all the newspapers of the following morning, was also translated and published in a French journal which had reached Massowah; and my informant, who had read it, expressed the opinion that, if a knowledge of the contents of that despatch should reach the Emperor Theodore, he would assuredly regard it as an absolute withdrawal of friendship on the part of England, if not as a declaration of hostilities, and might consequently be expected to treat British subjects within his dominions as prisoners of war*. This would be quite in accordance with what he is reported to have said to the British Envoy, when sending him to prison at Amba Magdala on the 6th of last July, "You are a sweet-mouthed gentleman, Mr. Rassam, *but those above you are my enemies.*"

When I was at Massowah there were several persons there quite willing and able to forward the French translation of Earl Russell's despatch into Abyssinia, and M. Bardel was there to read it to the Emperor, making such comments on it as he might think best suited to inflame his mind against the British Government and everybody dependent on or connected with them.

But there are other circumstances which, at the time in question, the beginning of July, 1866, must of a surety have come to the Emperor's knowledge.

* On the subject of this despatch see the remarks in page 136.

On April 29th the Egyptian steam frigate 'Ismailieh' and a steam transport of the Azizieh Company, having on board the new Egyptian Governor and 1200 soldiers, with several cannon, arrived at Massowah, for the purpose of taking possession of the Turkish dominions along the Abyssinian sea-board, recently transferred to Egypt through the instrumentality of Sir Henry Bulwer, the late British Ambassador at Constantinople*. After landing the Governor and 800 soldiers in the island of Massowah and at Arkiko on the adjoining mainland, the 'Ismailieh' left with the remaining 400 men and Hassan Pasha, who had come to inspect and garrison the several Turkish, now Egyptian, posts along the coast, and who afterward crossed over in the Egyptian frigate to Aden.

A few days after this, namely on May 11th, the British steamer 'Victoria' arrived at Massowah, having on board Colonel Merewether, Her Majesty's Resident at Aden, who, on entering the harbour, as a matter of course saluted the Egyptian flag, and was in return saluted by the fort, and shortly afterwards the new Egyptian Governor went on board to pay his respects. These ordinary acts of courtesy, really meaning nothing in themselves, might easily have been made significant by the evil-disposed persons at Massowah, who in any case would not have failed to announce the arrival of the new Egyptian Governor and garrison—a fact in itself of the gravest import.

It is well known how deeply the Emperor Theodore, not individually only but in common with his country-

* See page 135.

men generally, feels the loss of the Abyssinian sea-coast. "My kingdom reaches to the sea" is a frequent expression of the Emperor; and Consul Cameron has reported how, at his first interview with him, that monarch "broke out into invectives against the Turks, said they were encroaching on him on every side, spoke of the seven flags (as he expressed it) that they had planted on the sea-coast*, &c.—meaning by this the stations along the coast, which the Turks have occupied since the middle of the sixteenth century.

Is it then to be imagined that a Sovereign who could converse with Mr. Rassam on such various and remote topics as "the American war, the Ashantee war, the barbarity of the King of Dahomey, and the Government of Madagascar," should not be thoroughly acquainted with matters so much nearer home and affecting him so much more intimately?

But there is something, if possible, more immediately serious than even the occupation of Massowah and the Abyssinian coast by the Egyptians. This is the fact of the assembling of troops along the northern frontiers of Abyssinia, as is mentioned in a former page†, coupled with the further intelligence that troops have recently been introduced into Taka by the way of Suwákin; and though they have been so introduced for the ostensible purpose of keeping peace within the unsettled border districts *belonging to Egypt*—and I believe the matter has been so represented to the British Government on their asking for an explanation on the subject,—there can be little doubt that the real object is to occupy the

* See page 66.

† See page 135.

districts about which there exists a question between that Government and Abyssinia, if not even to make aggressions into those belonging to the latter power—which means much the same thing after all, now that Turkey has ceded to Egypt her right to *the whole* of Abyssinia.

All these matters prove how complicated the Abyssinian Question is, and serve to show that the longer its settlement is delayed, the greater are likely to be its complications and the difficulties in the way of its solution.

But to return to Mr. Flad, who left England on October 9th with the second letter from the Queen to the Emperor, his intention being to make the best of his way to Debra Tabor, or wherever the Emperor may happen to be; and his return, either to Massowah or to Matamma, with the rest of the finally released captives, is to be the signal for Colonel Merewether, with Mr. Talbot and the English workmen, to cross the Abyssinian frontier, carrying with them the machinery and presents, and to proceed to the Emperor's court. The treaty which Mr. Rassam is understood to have entered into provisionally* will then be settled; and it is said that Colonel Merewether may, under certain contingencies, return to England with an Embassy, or a pseudo-Embassy, from that Potentate to Her Britannic Majesty.

Mr. Talbot and the workmen, with the machinery and presents, left Southampton on November 4th by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer for Alexandria, and on the 9th Colonel Merewether followed them *viâ*

* See page 223.

Marseilles. The British steamer 'Victoria' was to meet them at Suez*, and convey them all to Massowah, where they would await intelligence from Mr. Flad.

Their departure had been delayed by the preparation of the machinery—the boiler of the steam-engine forming part of it having to be made in several pieces, on account of the difficulty of transporting heavy articles in Abyssinia, where there are no artificial roads.

Before concluding this portion of my work, it is requisite that I should say a few words respecting my own mission in connexion with that of Mr. Flad.

In the debate in the House of Lords on July 4th, 1865, to which allusion has already been made †, the Earl of Malmesbury said that "Dr. Beke had placed in his hands a paper, in which he stated he had not the slightest doubt he should have been able to obtain the liberation of the captives, as well as to convince the Emperor of Abyssinia of the wisdom of cultivating the arts of peace in preference to those of war, and of developing the immense resources of his dominions" ‡.

In the paper referred to by Lord Malmesbury, I had particularized the cultivation of the indigenous cotton of Ethiopia (which, introduced into Egypt only forty years ago, has been the main source of the wealth of that country), the production and employment of the iron and coal which abound in Abyssinia to an almost unlimited extent, and the formation of a line of electric telegraph across that country as an important portion of a chain connecting Europe with India, Australia, China, and the

* The 'Victoria' arrived at Suez on November 16th.

† See page 165.

‡ 'Times,' July 5, 1865.

entire eastern hemisphere,—the same particulars being more fully set out in my letter to Earl Russell of May 19th, 1865 *, a copy of which is given in the Appendix.

In going out to Abyssinia, as will be apparent from my first letter to the Emperor also printed in the Appendix, the intention of my wife and myself was to present ourselves before him as suppliants, having no connexion whatever with Her Majesty's Government; and I have no hesitation in saying that in my communications with that monarch I should have adopted a line of policy diametrically opposite to that of Mr. Rassam. It would be useless to describe here how I would have acted; but this only I must repeat, that we were both quite prepared to propose that, if the Emperor would allow Consul Cameron to leave the country, we would remain in his stead. As to the missionaries, I do not imagine there would have been any difficulty in the way of the Emperor's being reconciled with them and letting them go free. In fact, I believe he would have been only glad to have been furnished with a reasonable excuse for getting rid of them without compromising his dignity.

Of course when we heard that the captives had not only been liberated, but had actually started on their way to the frontier †, and it appeared to be a moral certainty that they would arrive on the coast in a few weeks, if not in a few days, it was useless for us to continue our journey, especially as at that time the rainy season was just setting in. We therefore returned to Egypt and thence

* Parliamentary Paper, 1865, 'Papers relating to the Imprisonment of British Subjects,' pp. 11-14.

† See page 220.

to England, fully expecting that the liberated captives would not be long behind us.

In the beginning of July, when Mr. Flad arrived in England, bringing the distressing news that all the captives, together with Mr. Rassam and his suite, had been "detained" by the Emperor*, he was also the bearer of a letter from that monarch to myself, directing me and my wife to come to him when it suited us by the way of Matamma†; and Mr. Flad informed me that the Emperor was most anxious for the arrival of myself and of the presents I had brought for him, and he suggested that should I not take them up myself, I should let him have them to deliver in my name.

For some time I was undecided as to what I should do, especially after the receipt of a second letter from the Emperor, recalling the permission given me to come to him, and ordering me to remain at Massowah until he should give me orders which way I was to take‡. But, after mature consideration of this and other matters which will be related in their proper place, I at length decided that, under existing circumstances, it was not advisable for me to attempt to proceed to the Emperor's court. I therefore freely allowed Mr. Flad to take the presents, or such of them as he might think fit to select.

The articles I had purchased had been chosen in accordance with the plan I had long entertained. Some few were taken out with me; but, owing to the slow-

* See page 221.

† A translation of this letter is given in the Appendix.

‡ This letter is likewise given in the Appendix.

ness with which the funds for my expedition were provided, most of them had to be sent after me; and notwithstanding a delay in my own progress much greater than I had contemplated, many of the things were still so long in coming out, that they did not reach Massowah till after I had left Abyssinia, and they had consequently to be returned to Aden*.

* The Committee of the "Abyssinian Captives Liberation Fund" having asked for a statement of my appropriation of the money received from them, in order that they may render an account of their stewardship to the subscribers to that fund, I hasten to furnish here the following particulars, which would more suitably have accompanied my personal narrative.

The total amount received from the Committee by myself and my agents, Messrs. Blyth, Greene, and Co., is £1979 13 7

And the following is a note of the payments out of the same:—

Presents purchased:—		
Paid for by myself	£ 52 19 3	
Paid for by my agents	667 15 7	
	<hr/>	£720 14 10 .
Travelling kit, &c.	125 9 11	
Freight and incidental expenses	121 7 3	
Sept. 1, 1865, to Jan. 16, 1866:—		
Journey out to Massowah of my wife and myself, including our stay in London and in Egypt, visit to Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, &c.	439 11 4	
Jan. 16, 1866, to May 12, 1866:—		
Expenses at Massowah and in Abyssinia, including supplies purchased in Egypt and at Aden	264 0 7	
May 12, 1866, to June 8, 1866:—		
Journey back to England	147 0 6	
	<hr/>	1818 4 5
Leaving a surplus of		£ 161 9 2

Against this there is the personal outfit of my wife and myself; and, further, no charge is made for our three months' forced stay in

The firearms, ammunition, cutlery, tools, &c. were taken over by Mr. Flad; the specimens of cotton goods of various kinds were rejected, as was also the electric telegraph apparatus, to which I had attached a special value. When however Mr. Talbot had been engaged to go out and was spoken to on the subject, he appears to have been alive to its importance, and asked to have it. Of course it was given.

These things are intended to be taken by Mr. Talbot into Abyssinia; and if only all turns out well, and the Emperor can be induced to direct his mind to the cultivation of the arts of peace—even if it be by following the example of the Powers of Europe, and manufacturing gunpowder, and Snider breach-loaders—there may be something yet in store for Abyssinia. Let us only hope it will be so, though, day by day, I fear the chance grows smaller of its being by means of the Emperor Theodore.

For myself, I had fondly hoped that I might personally have had some share in the regeneration of a country to which I have devoted so many years of the prime of my life. But, according to all appearances, mine is likely to be the common fate of pioneers, projectors, and inventors, who, after sacrificing time, talents, fortune, health, nay even life—poor Jacob Snider himself is the latest instance—in the furtherance of their views, find themselves, at the moment of fruition, superseded

London after our return, our house having been let for a year during our absence. In fact, I am out of pocket by the transaction, to say nothing of remuneration for time and services, which was not expected.

by others more fortunate, who reap the benefit and too often obtain likewise the credit of all their labours and sacrifices.

Still, if through the intervention of others—even though putting myself aside—good shall at length come to Abyssinia—the liberation of the long-suffering captives, in whose fate I feel so deep an interest, being an element of that good—I shall have my reward; for I shall have the proud consciousness of not having laboured in vain, whilst striving during so many years to direct the attention of the British Government and the British nation to the vast field which is there presented to British enterprise.

This is a theme on which it would be easy to dilate. But as that would hardly come within the scope of the present work, I will content myself with repeating the closing words of 'A Memoir on the Commerce of Abyssinia,' which I addressed to the Earl of Aberdeen, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, on December 9th, 1843—now three and twenty years ago:—"Were a regular system of commerce once introduced, there is no saying what development our trade with Abyssinia, and through it with the interior of Africa, might be made to attain. At present, the commerce of the country is so completely in its infancy and so trammelled by the few Mohammedan middle-men of Massowah, through whose hands it has to pass, that its actual condition forms no criterion of its future powers. The Abyssinians themselves have hitherto known so few wants, that they have had no inducement to turn their attention to what their country produces or might be made to produce; but when we bear in mind

that, though situate within the tropics, between the 10th and 16th degrees north of the Equator, it is, from its great elevation, blessed with a temperate climate, and, moreover, that its fertile soil, extending as it does through regions of almost every degree of temperature, might be made to yield the productions both of the West Indies and at the same time of the south of Europe, it is difficult to place a limit upon its capabilities under a more favourable state of things—the first grand step towards which is to induce the feeling of fresh wants in the minds of its inhabitants, who, to satisfy such feeling, would not be long in turning their lovely country to the uses for which it was assuredly intended by its Creator.”

CHAPTER XV.

RELATIONS OF ENGLAND TO ABYSSINIA — PROFESSED POLICY TO PROMOTE TRADE—NOT ACTED ON — REAL POLICY — COVERT WAR WITH FRANCE—THE FRENCH AND ENGLISH IN THE RED SEA —M. MUNZINGER'S CHARGE AGAINST CONSUL PLOWDEN—HE CAUSED ROMAN CATHOLICS TO BE BANISHED.—ESTABLISHED A PROTESTANT MISSION—CHARGE DISPROVED—BISHOP GOBAT'S MISSIONARIES—TO WORK AT THEIR TRADES—TO SAY NOTHING ABOUT RELIGION—MR. WALDMEIER'S MISSIONARY LABOURS—“THE BOOK OF QUINTE ESSENCE”—“MURDER” OF CONSUL PLOWDEN—FRANCE, ROMAN CATHOLICS, AND THE SEA-COAST—ENGLAND, PROTESTANTS, AND THE INTERIOR—AUTHOR'S INTERVIEW WITH EARL RUSSELL—WITH LORD PALMERSTON—CONSUL CAMERON'S INSTRUCTIONS—HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF—VENETIANS AIDED TURKS AGAINST PORTUGUESE—ENGLISH LEAGUE WITH TURKS AGAINST FRENCH—ABANDONMENT OF CHRISTIAN ABYSSINIA TO MOHAMMEDANS—EARL RUSSELL'S JUSTIFICATION—RIGHT OF TURKEY DISPUTED—FRENCH PRETENSIONS CONTINUED—ROMAN CATHOLIC MISSIONS PROSPER—PROTESTANT MISSIONS WITHDRAWN—NO HOPE OF CHRISTIANITY IN ABYSSINIA BUT IN ROME AND FRANCE.

SHOULD Mr. Flad succeed in his mission, as is fervently to be hoped, we may expect the new year to be ushered in with the most welcome return of the captives to the bosom of their families; and all that they will thenceforth have to do in connexion with Abyssinia will be to recount the hardships they have undergone.

It will remain for Colonel Merewether to proceed to the Court of the Emperor Theodore, for the purpose of endeavouring to renew the friendship which existed before the death of Consul Plowden and Mr. Bell, and

which has received so severe a trial from the events of the last four years.

In order to estimate the chances of success in what cannot but be an arduous undertaking, even under the most favourable circumstances, it is desirable, or it may rather be said it is absolutely essential, that we should consider what have hitherto been the relations—not official and exoteric, but esoteric and real—in which England has stood towards Abyssinia, so that we may be enabled to form something like a correct opinion as to the probable issue of the existing state of affairs.

For this purpose it is necessary to refer once more to Earl Russell's despatch of October 5th, 1865, to Colonel Stanton*. The object in writing that despatch is thus stated by his Lordship:—"It may be useful, in order to prevent misconceptions, that I should enable you to state, on any proper occasion, what has been and is the policy of the British Government regarding Abyssinia;" and after entering into various details, which have been more or less discussed by me in the preceding pages, Earl Russell concludes by saying, "I have thus explained to you that the policy of the British Government has been founded entirely on the desire to promote trade and intercourse with Abyssinia" †.

Though it is far from my desire to dispute in any way the correctness of the assertions of a nobleman holding the high position of Earl Russell, I am nevertheless under the necessity of appealing to the readers of these pages to say whether they have been able to discover any-

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, 'Further Correspondence,' &c., p. 60.

† *Ibid.* p. 63.

thing in them that tends to substantiate Earl Russell's assertion, or whether, on the contrary, everything does not go to prove directly the contrary. I will briefly recapitulate the main facts.

In the year 1847 Mr. Walter Plowden was appointed by Viscount Palmerston to be Her Majesty's Consul in Abyssinia. The instructions given to that officer have not been made public officially; but a summary of them has been inserted in pages 55 and 56 of this work, on the authority of Consul Plowden's brother. One of the objects of his appointment is indeed said to have been, "to establish and promote commercial intercourse between Great Britain and Abyssinia;" and in the year 1849 that officer, professedly with this object, concluded a treaty of friendship and commerce with the rulers of Abyssinia*. But as early as October 3rd, 1853, Lord Clarendon stated explicitly that, from Consul Plowden's reports then before him, it appeared there was little reason to expect that advantage would result to British interests from the conclusion of that treaty and the establishment of a British Consulate in Abyssinia†: and we have seen that from that time until his death in the beginning of 1860, with the exception of his official interference in Bogos and a brief visit to Massowah in 1854, Consul Plowden was occupied about the person of the Emperor ‡, and that, during the whole intervening period, and indeed down to the present day, nothing whatever has been done to show that the agents of the British Government, or the Government themselves, have acted in accordance with a policy founded entirely, or in the

* See page 21.

† See page 24.

‡ See page 56.

slightest degree, on a desire to promote trade and intercourse with Abyssinia, or have even entertained a thought respecting such a policy.

It will be asked, what then has been the real policy of England with regard to Abyssinia during this long series of years? The answer, though it may much surprise the British public, will not appear in the least strange to those persons who have at all watched the course of events in that quarter of the globe. *England has been covertly waging war with France on the western shores of the Red Sea.* The two Powers, through their political agents, and still more so through their religious missionaries (who, singularly enough, are Germans on the English side, and Italians on that of France), have been endeavoring to acquire the preponderance in Abyssinia. Yet more, the French have striven to obtain a footing on the sea-coast, which the English have done their best (or rather their worst) to prevent; and so the stream of events has gently and almost imperceptibly glided on, and *we have been drifting with the stream.* It is not difficult to foresee how it is all to end, especially if England is to continue, as she seems bent on continuing, in the line of policy she has hitherto adopted.

General assertions like these require to be substantiated by means of details, which I therefore proceed to give.

The first two chapters of the present work contain a brief outline of the rivalry that has long existed in Abyssinia between the French and Roman Catholics on the one hand, and the English and Protestants on the other. In page 17, referring to my pamphlet, 'The French and English in the Red Sea,' I have alluded more

especially to the "intrigues in Abyssinia of the agents of the Church of Rome and of the Government of France, which appear to have been systematically and silently carried on from the commencement of the present century."

I will not attempt to deny that, in saying this, I may have laid myself open to the imputation of having looked at matters too much as an Englishman; and, as I have already shown, this has been alleged against me by M. Munzinger, the French Vice-Consul at Massowah*. Such being the case, it is only fair that I should give that gentleman's opposite statement of the case—namely, that it was Mr. Plowden and the Protestant missionaries who intrigued against the Roman Catholics, if not actually against France.

In page 47 of his work already cited †, after having spoken in favourable terms of our late Consul, and described his relations with the Emperor Theodore, and his murder "by rebels," M. Munzinger thus expresses himself,—“That Mr. Plowden should have done everything to dispose the Emperor favourably towards England is natural; that he induced him to forbid the slave-trade is praiseworthy, even although the result was nothing and the prohibition was soon afterwards revoked; but the active part he took in the banishment of the Catholic mission was no great honour to him, and did him no good; for, in so acting, he relinquished a clear and open policy for a system of intrigues.

“It is known that Theodore sought to secure his throne through an alliance with the Coptic Bishop of

* See page 175.

† 'Ostafrikanische Studien.'

Abyssinia, and that in consequence the Emperor banished the Catholic missionaries * and attempted to compel their converts, the native priests, to recant. The result was naturally the reverse of what was intended. Persecution consolidated the infant congregation. But it was lamentable that an English Consul should have mixed himself up in the matter, when he had so favourable an opportunity of becoming the acknowledged protector of all Europeans.

“ Through these proceedings, the Catholic Mission became hostile to the Emperor and to England. A new French Consul arrived at Massowah, Negúsyé rose against the Emperor, and, as the Abuna supported the latter, Negúsyé favoured the Catholic Mission; and thus was formed an alliance between these three powers †. It must not be forgotten that in the train [Gefolge] of the English Consul, and under the protection of the Abuna, a Protestant Mission was established under the very eyes of the Emperor ” ‡.

The mission to which M. Munzinger alludes is that of Bishop Gobat's Scripture readers, better known as the artisan missionaries or the Emperor's European workmen, whose introduction into Abyssinia by Dr. Krapf is narrated in a preceding Chapter §.

On account of the important position the members of Bishop Gobat's mission have come to occupy in the recent occurrences between England and Abyssinia, it is expe-

* See page 39, *ante*. As is shown in page 16, the rivalry between the missionaries of the two religions was first openly manifested in the nomination of the Coptic Abúna.

† Namely, Tigre, France, and Rome.

‡ *Op. cit.* page 47.

§ Chapter VII. page 108.

dient to enter here into some further explanations respecting that mission, which would have been out of place, and indeed unintelligible, had they been given earlier.

The mission in question was founded in Abyssinia through the agency of the well-known missionary and my very good friend Dr. Krapf, who, in a work published by him a few years ago*, relates that when, in the year 1855, he went to Abyssinia, accompanied by Mr. Flad, for the purpose of establishing this mission, he addressed himself in the first instance to the Abuna, whom he told "that Bishop Gobat proposed to send Christian artisans to Abyssinia, whose primary occupation would be to work at their trades, but who at the same time would be the means of spreading the gospel both by precept and example. The Abuna rejoined that the King would be glad to receive skilled workmen, and that His Majesty had proposed to write to England, France, and Germany for such persons. He promised to read Bishop Gobat's letter to the King, and to recommend its contents to His Majesty's consideration"†.

Dr. Krapf then goes on to say that, consequent on this conversation, he and Mr. Flad received a visit from Mr. Bell, whom the Abuna had commissioned to tell them that they "*were not to say anything to the King about the religious vocation of the persons Bishop Gobat proposed to send to Abyssinia, but to dwell on the known and secular character of the mission, as religious matters belonged to the jurisdiction of the Abuna, who was our friend and*

* 'Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours,' &c., London, 1860.

† *Op. cit.* p. 453.

would protect and support Bishop Gobat's people as far as he had it in his power" *.

What is here related by Dr. Krapf took place in April 1855, at a time when Consul Plowden was altogether away †; so that M. Munzinger is nowise justified in saying that *in the train of the English Consul*, and under the protection of the Abuna, a Protestant mission was established under the very eyes of the Emperor." Neither is it the fact that the English Consul had anything to do with the expulsion of the Roman Catholic mission; for, as has been shown ‡, that mission was banished as a consequence of the intrigues connected with Theodore's rise to power, at which time Consul Plowden was away in the northern frontier districts; and he did not join the Emperor till June 1855 §, when everything was settled, and Dr. Krapf had left the Court and returned to the coast, as is related by him in the following passage,

* *Op.cit.* pp. 454-55.

† The following extracts from Dr. Krapf's work prove that Mr. Plowden had nothing whatever to do with the establishment of the mission.

"20th February [1865].—To-day we arrived safely at the island of Massowah."—P. 438.

"26th February.—Mr. Plowden, the English Consul, returned to day to Massowah. He thinks that we may proceed with safety to the frontiers of Tigre, but that we should halt there until the government of the new King shall be consolidated Mr. Plowden's opinion is, that the condition of Abyssinia will be materially improved by the new monarch, whom he knows personally."—P. 439.

"1st March.—We received to-day fresh and certain news from Abyssinia. *Ubye has been completely defeated by Theodore The Romish missionaries have been expelled from Tigre*, and are not to return to it. Upon the receipt of this news the Consul encouraged us to prosecute our journey to Abyssinia."—P. 440.

‡ See page 39.

§ See page 47.

which, for more than one reason, is deserving of being reproduced:—“*24th–28th April.*—After we had taken leave of the Abuna we commenced our return-journey to Gondar, which we reached in safety. *To-day Mr. Plowden arrived at Gondar**. He intended to accompany the King during his campaign against the Gallas, and to give him good advice respecting the improvement of his country. We took leave of Mr. Plowden, who has shown us much kindness and hospitality” †. The results of the intention thus expressed are shown in the Fourth Chapter of the present work ‡.

In the beginning of the following year (1856) Bishop Gobat’s lay missionaries arrived out in Abyssinia, where they soon made themselves serviceable to the Emperor in their capacity of workmen. Their missionary labours, though apparently restricted to the distribution of bibles, met with little favour either with the sovereign or with his people; and Mr. Flad relates that, on the occasion of their first interview with the Emperor, when they had presented some books to him, Mr. Bell “acknowledged to them after the interview that at that moment His Majesty would have been more pleased with a box of English gunpowder than, as he said, with books he already possessed” §. Mr. Bell “told them also that evil and, as he believed, false reports had reached the King’s ears;” and he concluded by warning them, “*if they desired to remain in Abyssinia, to say nothing*

* From Massowah, where he had remained since February: see the note in the preceding page.

† *Op. cit.* p. 460.

‡ Pages 47–52.

§ ‘Notes from the Journal of F. M. Flad,’ p. 34.

about faith and religion, and to avoid all appearance of teaching” *.

Notwithstanding this warning, the artisan missionaries have not abandoned their character of Scripture-readers, as is shown by Mr. Waldmeier's letter, published in the 'Record,' to which reference has already been made †; whence it is to be inferred that, although in the first instance the Emperor received Mr. Waldmeier

* *Op. cit.* p. 55.

† See pages 209, 227. The following is an extract from Mr. Waldmeier's letter:—"As to our mission, we believe it to be of the greatest importance just at this time, when the hearts of the people have been softened, and in some sense broken, by the sufferings and tribulations which the severe and successive judgments of God have brought upon them, so that they are better disposed to hear the Word of God than formerly. Messrs. Stern and Makerer have given us the most encouraging reports about the hunger of the people at Magdala after the Word of God. Yet if I had to be appointed again to a mission, I should hardly consent to be sent to any old and dead Church, where one must first break down before one can begin to build up, and where the breaking down is so tiresome and exhausting that there remains scarcely any strength afterwards to build up. Nevertheless our labours are not altogether in vain; for, in the first place, they are the means, as we sometimes are permitted to see, of bringing individuals to Jesus and to salvation; and, secondly, they are calculated to prepare a more general reform and a day of salvation for this people, of which we believe to perceive the dawn; though, as a thousand years are as one day before the Lord, a long time may still elapse before the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon the people at large.

"It is possible, as Mr. Rassam has told me, that in consequence of some treaty between England and Abyssinia, there may be more liberty for Europeans to come to Abyssinia and leave it again at pleasure; in which case personal consultations about the mission here, and from here to the Galla tribes, would be of the utmost interest. Till then we will continue to believe, to hope, and to labour, looking unto the Lord for strength and courage with patience to proclaim the salvation which is in Christ to this ruined people."—"Record," July 11, 1866.

and his companions into his employ, and accorded them his favour, solely in their character of workmen, yet his need for their services* has since induced him to shut his eyes to their labours as missionaries. Still, in the midst of the ignorant and bigoted native clergy, and with the Abuna utterly unable to protect them (for he has long been a prisoner at Magdala), their position cannot but be precarious; and therefore it is only natural that Mr. Waldmeier should have been anxious for the speedy departure of Mr. Rassam and the released prisoners, from an apprehension that it might indeed be “a dangerous thing if they were obliged to spend the rainy season” in Abyssinia, and hence lead to further complications, from which the artisan missionaries themselves might suffer †.

But, to return to M. Munzinger. After unjustly charging the English Consul with being the originator of all the mischief, he proceeds to say that, “England having declared herself for the Emperor, France turned to Negúsyé” ‡, with whom an alliance was formed, the terms of that alliance being (as M. Munzinger cannot deny though he hesitates directly to admit it,) that France should support that Prince in consideration of the cession

* Whilst correcting this sheet for the press, my attention has been directed to Mr. Stern's statements at the end of his letter of November 1st, 1865, printed in the Appendix, which I received for publication only a few days ago. From them we learn the secret of the hold Mr. Waldmeier and his companions have on the mind of the Emperor Theodore. They possess a copy of “The Book of Quinte Essence, or the Fifth Being, that is to say, Man's Heaven,” which “Hermes, the prophet, and King of Egypt after the Flood of Noah, father of philosophers, had, by revelations of an angel of God, to him sent.” This subject will be reverted to in a note on Mr. Stern's letter.—November 23rd, 1866.

† See page 227.

‡ *Op. cit.* p. 47.

of the sea-coast near Zulla, as has already been described*.

The "murder of Consul Plowden by some rebels in the neighbourhood of Gondar" (to use M. Munzinger's own expression) is passed over very lightly by him; for he would not have liked to bring it prominently forward, lest it should be said that, as those "rebels" were some of the troops of Negúsyé the ally of the French and the Roman Catholics, and as the alliance between these three was caused by acts in which Mr. Plowden is alleged (however unjustly) to have participated, and was avowedly formed for the purpose of counteracting those acts and as a matter of self-defence, the unavoidable conclusion is that both the French and the Roman Catholics were indirectly (though, we would hope, unconsciously) participators in this "murder" of the British Consul.

The French Government would doubtless repudiate all participation in Consul Plowden's death, as emphatically and unequivocally as the English Government would repudiate all participation in or even knowledge of the acts imputed to that officer by M. Munzinger. But neither the one nor the other of those two Governments could deny their general policy,—that of the one being to obtain a preponderance in Abyssinia and a footing on the Abyssinian coast, and that of the other being to prevent their doing so by every means in their power.

It has now to be considered what steps they have taken to attain the object they each have in view.

Common sense would suggest that the natural course

* See page 58.

for England to adopt would have been to form an alliance with the native rulers near the sea-coast. In the letter which I addressed to Lord Palmerston on April 4th, 1848, to which I have already alluded*, I pointed this out as a direct, consistent, and intelligible policy. That letter is given in the Appendix †; and though it was written upwards of eighteen years ago, I really do not see one word to alter in it, with the exception only of the changes of proper names &c., resulting from the subsequent appearance of other actors on the stage.

I may seem to be constantly referring to myself; but, mixed up as I am with so much that has occurred, it is impossible to avoid doing so. Ever since I addressed that letter to Lord Palmerston I have continued to harp on one string; or, I should rather say, I have continued to strike two chords—France, Roman Catholicism, and the Sea-coast—England, Protestantism, and the Interior,—of which the former is consonant and harmonious, whilst the latter is discordant and harsh.

After Captain Cameron came to England from his post in the Black Sea, and while he was waiting for his instructions from the Foreign Office, I saw him several times, and did not fail to point out to him the impolicy and impropriety of his going into the interior and leaving the coast to the French, and I told him that I would do all I could to prevent him from doing so.

His instructions were dated February 2nd, 1861 ‡; and on the 19th of that month I had the honour of an inter-

* See page 22.

† See page 297.

‡ Parliamentary Paper, 1865, 'Papers relating to the Imprisonment of British subjects,' p. 1.

view with the Foreign Secretary, Earl Russell, on whom I urged my stereotyped arguments. "But what then would you do with Theodore, Dr. Beke?" asked his Lordship. "My Lord, I would let him go to—just wherever he pleases," was my plain-spoken and not very diplomatic reply.

Of course this was not said on account of any personal objection to the Emperor Theodore himself. I admit that when he first gained possession of the throne, I could not think so highly of him as others thought, because I happened to know more than they did of his personal character, and (what is perhaps more to the purpose) I had no motive for wishing, and therefore none for thinking, well of him! But when once his possession of the throne had become *un fait accompli*, there was nothing more to be said on that point. But my objection to the ruler of the central provinces of Abyssinia, whoever he might be, still continued the same as it had been expressed (*mutatis mutandis*) in my letter of April 4th, 1848, written seven years before ever "the Emperor Theodore" came into existence:—"He is a chief having no jurisdiction or authority within the dominions of [the ruler of Tigre], and whose residence, Debra Tabor, situate at least 250 miles from the coast, is only to be reached by [Consul / Cameron's] running the gauntlet through the territories of [Ubye, Negúsyé, Góbazyé, or whoever the ruler of Tigre may be], at the risk of being stopped and plundered*, and with the certainty of causing (and not without reason) the feelings of that prince

* Consul Cameron was actually stopped by the "rebels" in 1862 (see page 82); and four years later Mr. Rassam, not being able to

to become more hostile than before to the British and the Protestants, and more favourable to the French and the Roman Catholics.”•

Failing of success with Earl Russell, the Foreign Secretary, I went to the Premier, Viscount Palmerston, who received me in his usual affable manner, but put me off with, “What can I do in the matter? It is in Lord Russell’s department. I am not a schoolmaster, you know: I cannot whip my colleagues.” Of course I was quite aware of the value of such expressions, the fact being that Earl Russell was merely carrying out Lord Palmerston’s own policy! I am only surprised that so clear-headed a statesman should not have been conscious of the fundamental error of that policy.

The result was that Consul Cameron went out to Abyssinia to take his predecessor’s place at the Court of the Emperor Theodore. His official instructions, as published, do not contain any mention of France with reference to Abyssinia; but it is evident, from what that officer says respecting his first interview with the Emperor Theodore in October 1862, that he had received orders “to elicit information from him regarding an intercourse with his new kingdom of Shoa and his hold on the tribes to the side of Zeyla”*—which had unquestionably a bearing on the proceedings of the French in that direction†. In addition to which, just after that interview, Consul Cameron received a letter from the Consul-General in Egypt, containing a “passage regard-

pass through Tigre, went by a long and circuitous route, and still was stopped by “rebels” (see page 180).

* See page 21.

† See page 63.

ing M. Schaeffer's mission to Tadjurrah, which was corroborated by an extract from the 'Home and Overland Mail,' forwarded from Aden, stating what the mission had done, and that the new settlement [at Obokh] was merely intended for a base of operations against Abyssinia;" all of which, Consul Cameron goes on to say, "was carefully read through to His Majesty by two interpreters well conversant with English" *.

The futility of all this is demonstrated by the fact that, in spite of our Consul's representations to the Emperor Theodorc, the French have succeeded in making good their footing at Obokh†; while, as regards that monarch's "new kingdom of Shoa," it has thrown off the yoke and reasserted its independence under Menilek, the grandson of our ally King Sáhela Selásye, whose flight from the Emperor's camp on July 1st, 1865, was the cause of the British captives having their fetters doubled, as has been related †.

It must be remarked here, that when that prince escaped on a former occasion, he applied to the French Consul at Aden for a supply of firearms; and, as I gave warning in a letter inserted in the 'Times' of September 18th, 1865§, it may be presumed that he has renewed his application to that officer, or more probably to the authorities at Obokh, which place, after having been neg-

* See page 72.

† See page 63.

‡ See page 145.

§ The following is an extract from my letter:—"Mr. Stern mentions, in his letter given in your impression of the 14th inst., the sudden flight from the royal camp of Menilek, Crown Prince of Shoa, and son-in-law of the Emperor Theodore; in consequence of which the enraged monarch caused all his Mohammedan and Galla prisoners to be executed, and fetters to be placed on the hands of their Christian

lected for some time, has now (if I am correctly informed) been taken actual possession of by the French, and a garrison placed there.

Further, on April 22nd, 1863, Earl Russell wrote to Consul Cameron, "You will *of course* keep Her Majesty's Government fully and accurately advised of French proceedings in Abyssinia"*—after having given that unfortunate officer orders the effect of which was to shut him up in a prison, where he could neither give nor receive information of any kind!

fellow-captives, in addition to those they already had on their legs—'20 lb. of foot-chains on our ankles,' as I copy from a letter of one of the wretched victims now before me.

"Were it not for the manner in which the fact of Menilek's escape was made feelingly known to Mr. Stern and his friends, one might have been inclined to regard his statement as an almost verbal repetition of one made in the 'Standard' of the 20th February last, respecting the flight of Menilek from the royal camp, and the imprisonment of the Abuna, or bishop, on the suspicion of having aided him in his escape.

"On that occasion the fugitive, on his arrival in his native country, applied to the French consular agent at Aden for a supply of firearms. I cannot say whether or not the representative of France was at all disposed to comply with the request; but I do know that some communication took place between him and the British authorities at Aden, and that the arms were not furnished. The Crown Prince, who without them was unable to make head against the Emperor, was defeated and taken prisoner, only to escape again as related by Mr. Stern.

"As everything repeats itself in Abyssinia, there can be little doubt that Menilek will renew—perhaps has already renewed—his application for firearms, either to the French Consul or to some other resident at Aden; and I would therefore avail myself of the medium of your widely-circulating journal to express the hope that suitable measures may be adopted by the authorities, both at home and abroad, to prevent such an application from being successful, as the inevitable consequence would be the immediate execution of our hapless countrymen."

* See page 104.

And to place the capital on the column which will ever stand as a memorial of British policy in Abyssinia, our Government have committed an act which, unless it is remedied (as perhaps it might still be) by a total reform, has given to Christianity in Eastern Africa the severest blow it has sustained since the conquest of Abyssinia by Mohammed Granye in the beginning of the 16th century.

It is wonderful how history sometimes repeats itself.

At that time, "the discovery then recently made by the Portuguese (I am quoting from a work of my own published in 1860 *) of the road to India round the Cape of Good Hope, had the inevitable consequence of turning a large portion of the commerce of the East into this new channel, to the serious injury of the Venetians, who had enjoyed the monopoly of that trade through Egypt and the Levant. To obviate this calamity, the Venetians did not scruple to lend their aid to the Mohammedan ruler of Egypt; and in order to enable him to cope in the Red Sea with their commercial rivals, they built him a powerful fleet of ships at Suez, for which they supplied the timber, cut in their own forests of Dalmatia, and transported on camels across the isthmus of Suez;" with which fleet the Turks soon drove the Portuguese out of the Red Sea, taking possession of the island of Massowah, their most important post, in the year 1558. Now, three centuries later, when there was a chance of Abyssinia's emancipating herself from her thralldom, England, animated by a spirit of rivalry similar to that of Venice, has induced the Ottoman Porte to transfer the entire Abyssinian sea-board to the Pasha

* 'The Sources of the Nile,' pp. 92, 93.

of Egypt, in the hope of thereby preventing France from acquiring a footing anywhere along the western coast of the Red Sea*.

There is too much reason to fear that this cession from Turkey to Egypt has been accompanied by a recognition of the absolute right of the former power, not merely to the sea-coast, but also to the whole of Abyssinia, as a dominion acquired by conquest in the sixteenth century; the consequence of which is that the Christian Abyssinians are henceforth to be regarded as vassals, immediately or mediately, of the Porte. In fact, the treatment of the pilgrims of that nation at Jerusalem† can only be regarded as a proof that we have been consenting to what is equivalent to the delivery of a whole Christian nation into slavery; for the domination of Turkey over Abyssinia was nominal and had no practical effect, whereas that of Egypt is real, active, and energetic, and, as her conduct in the surrounding districts but too plainly shows‡, will be that of a brutal and unmerciful tyrant and oppressor§.

A plausible justification for this conduct is given by Earl Russell in his despatch to Colonel Stanton, which his Lordship was unfortunately induced to indite (as is correctly stated in a leading article in the 'Times' of November 2nd, 1865) in "reply, in effect, to the letter of Dr. Beke, published in this journal on the 14th of September." "I am aware," says his Lordship, "that there are persons who wish Her Majesty's Government to interfere in behalf of Abyssinia, as a Christian country,

* See page 134.

† See Chapter VIII. pp. 129-137.

‡ See pages 133-137.

§ See pages 25-29.

against Turkey and Egypt, as Mahometan countries. But this policy has never been adopted by the British Government, and I trust never will be. If we were to make ourselves the protectors of the Emperor Theodore against the Sultan and his Viceroy of Egypt, we should become responsible for his acts, and be entangled in his quarrels with all his neighbours and rivals. The obligations of the British Government are various enough and heavy enough, without undertaking so costly, hazardous, and unprofitable a protectorate”*.

Religious considerations being out of the sphere of the enlightened statesmanship of the nineteenth century, we are left to look for the political advantages which have resulted, or are expected to result, from a transaction so discreditable to a Christian nation. And it has to be asked whether what our Government has done will effectuate the object they had in view : will it shut out France from the Abyssinian sea-board ?

It will, of course, be conceded that Turkey could not assign to Egypt more than she herself possessed ; and as far as occupation is requisite to substantiate the right of possession, she cannot pretend to *possess* more than here and there a point along the sea-shore. In speaking of the cession of that portion of the coast adjoining Zulla, which was made by Agau Negúsye to the French in 1859†, M. Munzinger, who thoroughly understands the subject in all its bearings, says that “ anyhow that coast belongs quite as much to the Abyssinians as to the

* ‘Times,’ November 1, 1865. Parliamentary Paper, 1866, ‘Further Correspondence,’ &c. pp. 63, 64.

† See page 58.

Turks”*; and there can be no doubt he is right †. Still, as long as we could consistently support Turkey in insisting on the observance of the Treaty of Paris, and could get her to occupy the coast in such a way as to show that her possession was something more than a mere naked right, it may have been a wise policy to recognize the pretensions of Turkey, or at all events not to dispute them.

But to be parties to the transfer of a naked right from the one power to the other, as a means of preventing France from acquiring a footing, when this nation neither recognizes the validity of that right, nor indeed cares to be bound by the Treaty of Paris, or by any other treaty, where her interests are concerned—the only practical effect of the transaction being to place Christian Abyssinia at the mercy of the stronger of the two Mohammedan powers,—is certainly neither an enlightened nor a far-seeing policy.

On the 8th of last February there appeared in the *Times*,⁷ an article which plainly showed that, notwithstanding this transfer, the French have not in the least abandoned their pretensions. When I was in Tigre shortly afterwards, I met the writer of that article and several of his countrymen, some of whom were members of Comte Bisson’s “French Colony of Abyssinia,” having been

* “Die Küste . . . die jedenfalls den Abyssiniern ebenso gehört, wie den Türken.”—‘Ostafrikanische Studien,’ p. 48.

† To my personal knowledge, the people of Halai and other Abyssinian villages along the edge of the tableland, at the present day, till the fields in the immediate vicinity of Zulla and harvest the crops, and they also pasture their flocks and herds in the meadows close to the sea-shore.

with him on his expedition into the Egyptian frontier districts*; and they were cognizant of all that England had done to prevent France from acquiring possession of the coast, which they quite ridiculed. They were then negotiating with Gebra Medhin, the Waagshum's Governor of Okulekusai, for the concession of a coalfield said to exist near the coast, at no great distance from Massowah; and they talked very loudly of their intention to acquire (I believe they had actually acquired) some district on the sea-coast where the Egyptians have no actual settlement, and then to put at issue the right of the Pasha to dispossess them. Shortly after my arrival at Massowah, one of the party left for France, with the avowed object of getting the Government to "protect French interests."

Though the "Defender of the Faith" does not profess to act up to this title anywhere but at home, the "Eldest Son of the Church" openly avows that he extends his protection to the Roman Catholic missionaries "dans tout l'univers"†. And the Church of Rome and her missionaries are not ungrateful.

From what is related in these pages, it is evident that France receives the greatest support from the Roman Catholic mission in Abyssinia; and it is not less certain that the mission has taken deep root in the country. Independently of the church at Massowah, to which allusion has been made‡, they have one at Halai and another at Ebbo, the Episcopal See, on the edge of the tableland further to the north, where is the tomb of Msgr. de' Jacobis, the first Bishop, who died a martyr

* See page 120.

† See page 99.

‡ See page 42.

to the French cause* rather than to that of Rome. The present Bishop, Msgr. Bel, is the first Frenchman who has filled the See, his predecessors, whether possessing the rank of Bishop or of Vicar Apostolic, having been Italians. There is likewise a mission at Keren, in Bogos, under the direction of Padre Stella, but within the jurisdiction of Msgr. Bel. I was assured that the number of native Abyssinians who have gone over to the Church of Rome is 60,000. This I believe to be an exaggeration, though there can be no question as to the number of converts being considerable; and it increases daily, the native clergy having but little power or influence in the frontier districts.

The different positions of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant Missions in that country needs not to be dwelt on, except that I would hazard the remark, that far better would it have been had the sympathies of Bishop Gobat and Dr. Krapf and their friends not been enlisted on the side of Ras Ali and his successor Theodore, and that they had not (to repeat the words of my letter to Lord Palmerston of April 4th, 1848) "joined in the cry of Mr. Salt's party † against Ubye—the usurper, the tyrant, the oppressor, as he is called" ‡. They have now learned, at the serious cost of the Protestant cause, of which they so long have been the zealous, earnest, conscientious, and indefatigable—I only wish I could add judicious and successful—agents, that there are others more deserving of those epithets than Dedjatj Ubye of Tigre, who, by the inscrutable decree of an overruling Providence,

* See page 59.

† See page 12.

‡ See the Appendix, page 297.

has long been a fellow-prisoner at Magdala of our ill-fated missionaries, who were taught to look on him as their enemy.

The result is that the Protestant Missions, both the London Society's and the Scottish, have been given up—or, to speak more properly, they will be withdrawn whenever the Emperor Theodore shall permit the poor missionaries to leave the country*; and as soon as Mr. Talbot and the six English workmen reach Gaffat as substitutes for the liberated captives, it may be anticipated that Bishop Gobat's artisan missionaries will either become completely secularized, or else will have to quit Abyssinia like their countrymen the other Protestant missionaries. Then, with the encroachments of Mohammedanism on every side, the only hope of Christianity in Abyssinia for safety against annihilation will be in Rome and France, as in its last great struggle it was in Rome and Portugal. Taught by the experience of their precursors, the Lazarists of the 19th century will doubtless be in their generation wiser than the Jesuits of the 16th and 17th centuries.

* I have just heard that the members of the Scottish mission, Messrs. Steiger and Brandeis, have entered the Emperor's service.—*December 3rd, 1866*

CHAPTER XVI.

POLICY OF ENGLAND—ITS EFFECTS ON ABYSSINIA—MASSOWAH AND SEA-COAST OFFERED TO THEODORE—LORD CLARENDON'S CONSENT—CONSUL PLOWDEN'S DEATH—CAPTAIN CAMERON'S APPOINTMENT—CHANGE OF POLICY—ABYSSINIA ABANDONED TO TURKEY—CONSUL'S ACTS REPUDIATED—SIR WILLIAM COGHAN'S EVIDENCE AS TO ALTERED POLICY—THEODORE RETALIATES—MAKES WAR AFTER HIS FASHION—ENGLAND DEFEATED AND SUES FOR PEACE—THEODORE'S CONDUCT CONDONED—TREATY WITH MR. RASSAM—TO BE CONFIRMED BY COLONEL MEREWETHER—MR. RASSAM AND CAPTIVES IMPRISONED—VACILLATING POLICY OF ENGLAND—STATE OF PARTIES IN ABYSSINIA—TADELU GWALU IN GODJAM—CAUSE OF THEODORE'S DOWNFALL—PRESTIGE GONE—FRENCH IN SHOA AND TIGRE—KING MENLEK OF SHOA—OIZORO WARKYET AT THE HEAD OF WOLLO GALLAS—TESSU GÓBAZYE IN NORTH-WEST PROVINCES—WAAGSHUM GÓBAZYE—KING HEZEKIAH—FUTURE EMPEROR—STATE OF PARTIES IN TIGRE—WARFARE—"THE BATTLE OF AXUM"—COMTE BISSON'S REPORT—ENGLISHMEN SAID TO BE PRESENT—REPORT A FABRICATION—DOUBTS AS TO BATTLE—ITS PROBABILITY—POSSIBILITY OF THEODORE'S PRESENCE—FALSE REPORT OF EXECUTION OF CAPTIVES—FUTURE POLICY OF ENGLAND—TREATY WITH THEODORE TOO LATE—MACHINES AND GUNPOWDER-MAKERS USELESS WITHOUT FURTHER HELP—AUTHOR'S SUGGESTIONS—ENGLAND WORSE OFF THAN IN 1847—ENLIGHTENED POLICY OF FRANCE—ENGLAND DRIFTING WITH THE STREAM—SOONER OR LATER WAR.

IN the preceding Chapter has been considered the policy of England with reference to France. We have now to notice the effects of that policy in relation to Abyssinia.

For this purpose it will not be necessary to go further back than to Consul Plowden's Report to the Earl of

Clarendon, dated Gondar, June 25th, 1855*,—although from the contents of that report it is evident that there is much yet to be learned respecting what had previously “been arranged with the Ras Ali” †.

Consul Plowden states that on his first interview with the Emperor, after urging on him the establishment of a Consulate within his dominions, he “ventured to hint that *the sea-coast and Massowah might possibly be given up to him on his consent*” ‡. What authority Mr. Plowden had for making such a proposal does not appear; but at all events it was quite in the spirit of the stipulation in the treaty of November 2nd, 1849, between England and Abyssinia, that the Sovereigns of the two countries should “respectively, to the best of their power, endeavour to keep open and to secure the avenues of approach between the sea-coast and Abyssinia” §. But whether he had been previously authorized or not is immaterial, inasmuch as Lord Clarendon in his reply, dated November 27th of the same year, unhesitatingly adopted that officer’s proposal by saying, “I entirely approve your proceedings as reported in that despatch, *as well as the language held by you at your interview with the King Theodorus*” ||; and he added that the Queen of England would receive ambassadors from that monarch, and would defray the expenses of their journey to England:

It is true that the condition was attached that Consul Plowden should obtain “from the King a distinct assurance that he renounced all idea of conquest in Egypt and

* Parliamentary Paper, 1866, ‘Further Correspondence,’ &c., pp. 41-47.

† *Ibid.* page 45.

‡ See page 49.

§ See page 21.

|| See page 50.

at Massowah”*. But the nature of an “assurance” of the sort is well understood. When obtained it would have been worth just as much as that which Lord Clarendon said had been given by the Viceroy of Egypt not to attack Abyssinia. But his lordship added significantly, that “Her Majesty’s Government would subject themselves to grave suspicions if they received an embassy from a sovereign whose designs against the Sultan, the ally of the Queen of England, *were previously known to them;*” and it is only surprising that Theodore did not act on the hint so plainly given him.

Consul Plowden’s despatches between the years 1855 and 1860 have not been made public; and it would not be worth while to speculate as to what took place in the interval. But we know that the death of that officer, in March 1860, and that of his comrade, Mr. Bell, in October following, unfortunately put a stop to diplomatic relations between England and Abyssinia.

The resumption of these relations by Captain Cameron, and the calamitous results of such resumption, have been detailed in the preceding pages †, and need not be dwelt on here. All that is essential to remark is that, at the time of that officer’s departure from England, and subsequently, till February 20th, 1862, when Earl Russell wrote to the Emperor Theodore the letter given in a former page ‡, Abyssinia continued to be regarded as an independent nation and its sovereign as a friend and ally of the British Government.

During the course of the year 1862 a radical change took place in the policy of England with respect to

* See page 51.

† Page 66 *et seq.*

‡ See page 67.

Abyssinia. What was its precise motive and how it came about will be best understood when the papers connected with "the Abyssinian Question"—particularly those relating to the acquisition of Obokh by France—are laid before Parliament. Meanwhile we have evidence of the change having occurred before the end of that year, in the fact that on October 30th, 1862, Consul Finn, the "officious" protector of the Christian Abyssinian pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre, was removed from Jerusalem and replaced by Mr. Moore, who, as the exponent of the altered policy of the British Government, at once expressed his inability to help those pilgrims, *on the ground of their being Turkish subjects* *.

Consequently it was in accordance with that altered policy that Consul Cameron's negotiations with the Emperor Theodore as an independent Sovereign were repudiated, and his interference on behalf of the inhabitants of the Abyssinian provinces of Bogos condemned; and as Her Majesty's Government had then made up their minds "to withdraw as much as possible from Abyssinian engagements, Abyssinian alliances, and British interference in Abyssinia" †, the Emperor's request for a mission from Bombay was refused ‡, and his letter to the Queen was intentionally left unanswered §; whilst the unfortunate Consul himself was ordered, when it was no longer in his power, to return to "his post" at the Turkish (now Egyptian) island of Massowah ||.

Sir William Coghlan, who, having long occupied the important post of Political Resident at Aden, cannot but

* See page 131. † See page 136. ‡ See pages 79 and 92.

§ See pages 149 and 153. || See pages 104, 122, and 215, *note*.

be well acquainted with the acts and intentions of our Government, makes use of expressions in his 'Memorandum on the Abyssinian Difficulty,' printed in the papers laid before Parliament in the Session of 1865 *, which clearly point to the political abandonment of Abyssinia. He "assumes," for instance, that, apart from the release of the captives, "*any further relations with Abyssiniâ, except as they may affect the object, are not desired by Her Majesty's Government;*" and again, supposing a mission to be sent for that purpose, he adds, "In the possible event of the release of the captives before the arrival of the mission, and on a certainty that they had removed beyond the power of the King, *it is presumed that Her Majesty's Government would not desire the mission to go on. British subjects might be warned, and the mission would return*" †; and consequently Abyssinia and the Abyssinians, both at home and at Jerusalem, would be abandoned (bound, as it were, hand and foot) to the Sultan and his Viceroy of Egypt.

There can hardly be any doubt that it was with a view to prevent this fatal consummation, that Theodore adopted a line of conduct which "grossly violated the rules of civilization and of international law." But is not this one of those extreme cases which may be said to make their own laws? What other remedy had the ill-starred monarch? Was it not the only way in which he could wage war against England? Had one of the Great Powers of Europe been treated half as ill, there would have been an immediate commencement of hosti-

* 'Papers relating to the Imprisonment of British Subjects,' p. 7.

† *Ibid.* p. 9.

lities—invasion of territory, seizure and destruction of the property of harmless and inoffensive private individuals having no more to do with the quarrel than the poor “British Captives in Abyssinia,” personal violence, imprisonment, punishment, nay torture or even death, if they resisted or perhaps even complained—a Königgrätz (Sadowa) or Custozza, with the sacrifice of thousands of lives—and all according to the rules of civilization and of international law !

I do not think of justifying the conduct of the Emperor Theodore and his advisers (whoever they may be), any more than I can commend that of the King of Prussia and Count Bismark. But, like them, he carried on war according to his own lights and after his own fashion, and like them he gained the victory, England, like Austria, being forced—though with infinitely less honour—to sue for peace.

After all the cruelties inflicted on Her Britannic Majesty’s Consul and the other unfortunate European prisoners, the “renewal of friendship between Abyssinia and England was happily established”—at the expense only of those “insincere, ill-behaved, ill-mannered, and ill-tempered” persons who had “created the breach” between the Emperor Theodore and our Queen; and “every one, whether European or Abyssinian, admitted”—and what everybody says must be true—“that no sovereign could be more attentive and gracious to the representative of a foreign government than Theodore of Abyssinia was to Mr. Rassam”*.

That monarch being thus admitted within the pale of

* See page 205. I could cite examples much nearer home of

civilization, the preliminaries of a treaty were arranged between him and the British envoy, who was, however, "detained" awhile by His Majesty—"the object of the King being, it is stated, to procure an assurance of good disposition towards him before the Europeans departed"*; and this assurance has accordingly been given in a second letter from Her Britannic Majesty to her "good friend," the Emperor of Abyssinia, which Mr. Flad is the bearer of, and Colonel Merewether is gone to confirm, accompanied by Mr. Talhot and six English workmen, who are to take the place of Mr. Rassam and the European captives.

When shattered and prostrate, after the tortures to which they had been subjected on the 12th of May, 1864—now more than a year and a half ago, and they still prisoners!—Samuel, the Emperor's steward ("that compound of malice, hatred, and cunning," as he is called by one who has but too much reason to know him †, but who seemed to Mr. Rassam to be "really desirous to promote a friendly feeling between England and Abyssinia"), said to the unhappy captives, "Do you know who lies here?" pointing to the Consul; "This is Victoria!"

It was hardly to be imagined that the name of Her Majesty and the honour of the British nation could be subjected, as they have been, to still greater indignity.

Suspecting perfidy on the part of England—and, alas! he has unhappily too much reason for doing so—the Emperor of Abyssinia has put Mr. Rassam and all the

praise bestowed on Theodore's conduct. But it is not worth while now to attract notice to these specimens of flunkyism.

* See page 221.

† See Mr. Stern's letter in the Appendix.

captives again in chains and sent them to Magdala, where, according to the latest intelligence*, they have passed the rainy season. And it is to be dreaded that we have not yet seen the end.

It shall however be assumed, notwithstanding all that has passed and in spite of all forebodings, that the Emperor Theodore will listen to the representations made to him in Her Britannic Majesty's second letter, of which Mr. Flad is the bearer, and that he will liberate Mr. Rassam and all the captives—such being the condition on which Colonel Merewether is prepared to carry out Mr. Rassam's arrangements†. Nevertheless it is not at all certain whether this compliance with *most* of his demands may not still be unavailing. He may insist on *everything* being granted; and I believe this will not be acceded to—that in fact it could not be done unless England felt disposed for another Crimean war. What then, after all, would our Government have to do? To leave the captives to their fate, or to go to war with Theodore himself?

But we must not look at the dark side. It shall be taken for granted that all goes on favourably; the Emperor is induced to abandon his claims; the captives are all liberated; a treaty signed between the Emperor and Colonel Merewether on behalf of Her Britannic Majesty, and Mr. Talbot and the six English workmen left behind in Abyssinia. What is to happen then? There is no need to disguise the fact, that these Englishmen have been enlisted into the service of the Abyssinian monarch for the purpose of assisting him with the means of sub-

* See the 'Times' of November 29, 1866.

† See page 231.

jugating his enemies and acquiring the sovereignty of the whole of Abyssinia. Such a scheme might have been feasible a few years ago ; but in consequence of the vacillating policy of the British Government—who encouraged Theodore when he ought not to have been encouraged, gave him up just at a moment when, if good were expected from the alliance, he ought to have been supported and not given up, and is now taking him up again when, according to all appearances, he is no longer worth taking up—there remains scarcely any hope that, even with the help of these Englishmen and of the German and other artisans he has already in his employ, he will be able, I will not say to conquer the “rebels” and the “Turks,” but to hold his own against them.

The following summary of the state of parties in May last, will serve to show what his chances are.

For several years past Theodore has attempted, but in vain, to conquer Tádela Gwalu, the hereditary prince of Godjam*. Year after year has he led his army across the

* This warrior is the son of Dedjatj Gwalu, who was the grandson of Ras Hailu, the friend of the traveller Bruce, by whom he is called “Ayto Aylo.”

In the time of Ras Hailu, a young man named Zaudye (a native of Damot, of Galla extraction, whose history is almost more extraordinary than that of Theodore himself) raised himself to power, and received in marriage Oizoro Dinkanish, the Ras's daughter, by whom he was the father of Dedjatj Goshu (“the Father of the white men,” as Consul Plowden calls him, and my very good friend), who was slain in battle by Theodore, and whose son Biru is now a captive at Magdala. Through his marriage with Ras Hailu's daughter and his own great talent, Dedjatj Zaudye deflected from that prince's male descendants the sovereignty of Godjam and Damot, which, since the defeat and imprisonment of Biru Goshu, has been resumed by Tádela Gwalu, the lineal male heir.

Abai into the peninsula of Godjam, in the extreme south-west of the empire, with no result except to ravage and ruin, though not absolutely to "destroy," those unhappy districts* ; whilst Tádela himself retires into his fortresses, Mútera and Djibélla, impregnable by nature, where he laughs the invader to scorn.

The resistance of Tádela may be regarded as the proximate cause of Theodore's downfall, inasmuch as it has shown to the nation at large that the "King of Kings," the would-be conqueror of all nations, can be withstood. At one time his *prestige* was such that he had only to approach at the head of a victorious army, and the "rebels," in however great force, were unable to offer any firm resistance, and either dispersed without striking a blow, or else went over bodily to his side.

I have reason to know that the faith in Theodore's invincibility has been, and even to this day is, entertained not only in Abyssinia, but likewise in England, by persons whose opinions must necessarily have great weight with our Government. Even Mr. Flad, when in this country, expressed himself in this sense, he having such a dread of the despot as to imagine that every one else must look on him as he and those about the Court have only too much reason to do †.

Meanwhile, Theodore's absence from the other provinces of Abyssinia nearer to the coast has allowed their

* See page 189.

† The petty tyranny of Theodore is such, that if he calls to a person about him to come, and that person does not fly at the bidding—not walk even quickly, but actually *run*—he is saluted with all sorts of abusive epithets, and often "gets the stick" for keeping the impatient despot waiting.

rulers to gain strength, and, in the case of Shoa and Tigre, to make alliances with the French, if not with France, and in their turn to obtain not merely machines and gunpowder makers, but likewise soldiers and firearms, by which means they may be expected to be able to counteract all that Mr. Talbot and his assistants will be able to perform.

Several months ago, as I stated in the 'Times' of October 1st, "there was a talk of some French officers of the army of Algiers going out to Northern Abyssinia, taking with them several light pieces of artillery." And I added the expression of my belief that on this point, as well as that of the earlier application of the King of Shoa to the French Consul at Aden for a supply of firearms, to which allusion has been made in a former page*, "representations had been made to the Government of France." But I added, not without reason, that "natives of that country may have gone to Abyssinia nevertheless;" and the mission of Mr. Talbot and his English companions, to a monarch who has set the Emperor Napoleon at defiance and has virtually declared war against France †, must of course deprive the English Government of all further right to make representations or demand explanations on the subject.

As to the Kingdom of Shoa, it has (as already stated ‡) reasserted its independence under the sovereignty of Menilek, the grandson of Sáhela Selásye; and it is generally considered that the resubjugation of that country is hopeless. If, as is probable, now that the French are so near to him at Obokh, the King of Shoa has renewed the

* See page 266.

† See page 101.

‡ See page 145.

alliance with France—which was established through M. Rochet, and to counteract which was the fruitless object of Major Harris's mission in 1841*—it may be looked on as certain that the Emperor Theodore will never have it in his power to conquer Shoa, or even to make head against King Menilek should he become the aggressor.

The revival of the two provinces of Tigre and Shoa as separate and independent kingdoms, setting Theodore at defiance, coupled with the persistent rebellion of Tádela Gwalu in Godjam, has, in point of fact, placed the Abyssinian Empire in the position in which it was under the puppet Emperors, before his accession to the throne. The resemblance will be seen to be complete when we have said a few words respecting the other portions of the now disintegrated Empire.

In the centre of Abyssinia, a female leader named Warkyet, a relative of Oizoro Menen, Ras Ali's mother, is at the head of the powerful tribes of Mohammedan Wollo Gallas, and threatens to wrest from Theodore all his most valued and dearly bought conquests in that direction, including Amba Magdála, his principal hold, which has obtained such unenviable notoriety as the Englishmen's prison. Had warlike measures against Theodore been decided on, it might have been no difficult task to enlist these Gallas on our side, and by their means to have obtained possession of Magdala by a *coup de main*, and so perhaps have liberated the captives, though not in the way recently suggested by Dr. Krapf, to whose proposition, however, the serious consideration of the Foreign Office has been accorded, not-

* See page 13.

withstanding that there are in the archives of that office conclusive proofs of its ineligibility!

In the north-west, in Walkait, Semyen, and the neighbouring provinces, a chief named Tessu Góbazye, a *nouveau-né*, has for some time past held sway and become virtually independent, he having extended his occupation of the country as far as Gondar, and even beyond. It is he whose troops stopped Mr. Rassam in January last, when only a few miles from Gondar*. When I was in Abyssinia, I heard that he and Waagshum Góbazye had formed an alliance, the basis of which was that they should each oppose Theodore to the death, and that whichever of the two killed him or made him prisoner should be recognized as Emperor by the other. But this I am slow to credit, because I have been informed, on good authority, that the Waagshum intends to declare himself Emperor with the aid of the King of Shoa and of the French, and to be crowned by the name of Hízkiás † or Hezekiah—there being a native prophecy that a monarch of that name shall reign, who is to be the precursor of the true Teódros or Theodore.

In North-eastern Abyssinia, Deras, the Waagshum's lieutenant in Tigre, who in the beginning of March last had sustained a complete defeat at the hands of Tekla Georgis, the brother and deputy of Ras Bariaú, Theodore's lieutenant, was, when I left the country in May, regaining strength; whilst Tekla Georgis, who in the

* See page 180.

† This is the "Ischias" of Bruce, who almost invariably gives the native names wrongly.

very flush of victory had had his army destroyed by cholera, was obliged to retire into Shire, his native province, where he was raising an army to replace the one destroyed. Deras, on the other hand, had united his forces at Adigrat to those of the Governor of Agame, Subbart, the son of Sabagádis, the friend of the English in the time of Mr. Salt and of Bishop Gobat. Gebra Medhin, the Governor of Okulekusai, the district in which Halai is situated, whose troops had dispersed on the defeat of Deras by Tekla Georgis, had again collected an army of some force, and had moved westward in the direction of the Mareb.

All these chiefs acknowledge the supremacy of Waagshum Góbazyé, between whom and Tessu Góbazyé the whole of Northern Abyssinia was divided, with the exception of Shire, Serawe, and Hamasyen, which were still held by governors named by Theodore. The latter had just written an abusive letter to Dedjatj Hailu, the governor of the two last-named provinces, calling him the one-eyed son of a bad woman (he has lost an eye in battle), and ordering him to cross the Mareb and attack Gebra Medhin.

I have heard that one of Theodore's objects in sending Hailu into Okulekusai was to fetch myself and my wife, for whose arrival he was very anxious; and Tekla Georgis wrote to me from Axum, that if I did not choose to wait for his coming, my better course would be to try the road across the Mareb into Hamasyen, which I might have done, had not Gebra Medhin moved directly across my path. But different counsels prevailed at the Emperor's court, and on May 28th, as has already been

related*, the second letter, written in English, was sent to me, ordering me to leave Halai and return to Massowah. I am grateful for the order, whatever may have been the cause of its being given.

Such then was the state of Abyssinia when I left that country in the beginning of last May. At that time the general impression was, that some important military operations were likely to take place before the setting in of the rainy season. The Waagshum, whose movements had for several months previously been concealed, evidently with an object, but who was generally believed to have gone southward†—perhaps to Shoa—was expected in Tigre to pass the winter there. At the same time it was currently reported that Ras Bariau, the Emperor's governor of that province, would come and place himself at the head of the army his brother Tekla Georgis was collecting, to drive the Waagshum out and hold possession for the Emperor—nay, that the Emperor himself was coming into Tigre, from which province no tribute has been received by him for the last three years ‡.

The 'Times' of July 23rd last contained an extract from a Cairo newspaper, 'Il Commercio,' under date of July 7th, announcing that a tremendous battle was imminent between the armies of the Emperor and the Waagshum, and that it was calculated there would be not less than 150,000 combatants in the field §.

* See page 218.

† During part of the time he went and destroyed Zebit, as is mentioned in page 143.

‡ See the 'Times' of April 7, 1866.

§ In the 'Times' of July 25th I commented on this intelligence, pointing out how it agreed with what I had myself heard.

On September 17th, nearly two months afterwards, a telegram from Constantinople appeared in the 'Times' and other newspapers, announcing that an engagement had actually taken place near Abrin [Axum or Adowa?] between the Abyssinians and the Tigre insurgents, and that the Emperor was expected with reinforcements.

A week later, namely on September 24th, an article appeared in the 'Times' from the Paris correspondent of that journal, reproducing a long account which had appeared in the 'Nice Journal,' of what is there styled "the battle of Axum," said to have been fought on July 30th, between the army of Theodore and the insurgents of Tigre and Shoa. The account was communicated by Comte Bisson, who signed himself "Founder of the French Colony of Abyssinia," and said he had received it in the form of a report from one of his colonists present at the battle. Theodore was stated to have been at the head of 95,000 men; and the forces of the insurgents were estimated to have been rather larger. Several Englishmen were alleged to have been in arms against the Emperor. In the report we find such expressions as these:—"The English were there, in constant communication with Aden: the insurgents drew arms and supplies from that place"—"three pieces of artillery of English manufacture" were taken from them—and "among the Tigrean dead were recognized Egyptians and some English faces, especially in the fort. No doubt but that officers of that nation directed all the evolutions of the battle," &c.

All this is so utterly improbable that, if the story is not a pure fiction from beginning to end, it is meant as a blind to conceal the fact that the Europeans present in

the army of Waagshum Góbazyé (the intended Emperor Hezekiah) were Frenchmen and not Englishmen, and that the field-pieces, even if of English manufacture, were introduced into Tigre by French officers—not improbably those I heard of several months ago, as has just been mentioned*.

There appears to be, I do not know for what reason, a determination on the part of every one who has any relations with Her Majesty's Government, to deny altogether the fact of any great battle—or indeed any battle at all—having been fought in Tigre before the rains. As to the idea of Theodore's having been present at such a battle, it is looked on as preposterous. Mr. Flad himself published a letter in the 'Times' of September 26th last, to show how utterly impossible it was for Theodore to have transported an army in twenty-three days from Debra Tabor, where he was on July 7th, to Axum, where the battle was said to have been fought on the 30th of the same month. But, as I stated in the same journal on October 1st, and from the several facts which I have just related, it is indisputable that the Emperor's army was already in Tigre, as were likewise the united forces of Tigre and Shoa—150,000 combatants in all, as stated in the Cairo newspaper; a battle was said to be imminent; the Emperor was expected to arrive with reinforcements; and as the distance between Debra Tabor and Axum is only 170 English statute miles in a direct line, it stands to reason that a strategist like Theodore, whose great successes have mainly resulted from his rapid marches, frequently by night, and from

* See page 285.

his falling unexpectedly on the enemy*, might easily have performed that distance, at the head of a select or even a large body of cavalry, in much less time than twenty-three days †.

I cannot then bring myself to doubt the fact of an important battle having been fought in Tigre before the rainy season fully set in, and that, whether the Emperor was there or not in person, the result was unfavourable to him. Comte Bisson's correspondent asserted that, in consequence of the repulse, if not defeat, which the Emperor sustained, he had "in his exasperation ordered the immediate execution of all the English captives, sparing only the women and children." But, thank God, this we know to be untrue, because news has just been received from Massowah that at about the end of September the captives were all alive, though still in chains at Magdala.

It now only remains for me to say a few words respecting the future policy of England with regard to Abyssinia.

* See page 143.

† In the 'Times' of October 1st I stated that, "In the year 1843 I went from Debra Tabor to Adowa, which is close to Axum, by a circuitous route through Lasta, the Waagshum's country, and my actual time on the road was 121½ hours. My diary is published in the 'Journal of the Royal Geographical Society,' vol. xiv. pp. 51-62, with a map." Now, allowing as much as double the direct distance for the irregularities of surface and deflections from the straight line, the distance to be travelled between the two extremes would be 340 statute miles, and supposing the Emperor to have travelled only twice as fast as I did, the journey would have occupied him sixty-two hours in the saddle; and to say that he could not perform such a journey between the 7th and 30th July—twenty-three days—is too absurd to be insisted on for a moment when the matter is thus put to the test of figures.

Should all result favourably as regards the prisoners, Colonel Merewether will, it is presumed, proceed to the Emperor's court and conclude with him the treaty, of which the preliminaries have been settled by Mr. Rassam. In the present state of affairs it is not very intelligible what can be the object of that treaty. Theodore may be nominally Emperor of Abyssinia, but his power is much weakened, if not entirely gone; and it is much to be questioned whether an alliance with England would restore it unless our Government should engage to support him on the throne. "Machines and gunpowder-makers" alone will not help him now, I fear; and it is hardly to be imagined that England would bind herself to support him by any other means.

And yet it is manifest that Mr. Talbot and the English workmen, who have gone to Abyssinia under the guarantee of the British Government, cannot be left without protection. It would not now do to say, "British subjects might be warned, and the mission would return"*. Consul Cameron wisely foresaw this very case, when in his letter of October 22nd, 1862, he urged on the Emperor the recognition of a Consul within his dominions, in the following terms:—"Some arrangement, at any rate, on this point will be necessary, if your Majesty really wishes to keep up a close friendship with England. I feel certain, too, that if English artisans were to come here, as I have heard is your Majesty's wish, it would be impossible for them to stay, unless there was an officer of some kind, either Envoy or Consul, to look after them" †.

* See page 279.

† See the Appendix, page 314.

As already stated*, the 'Times' of July 8th contains an extract from a letter which I wrote from Halai to a person of high rank in England, on the 27th of April, before the news of Mr. Rassam's alleged final success reached me. In that letter I predicted the detention of Mr. Rassam, and asked the question, "What would Her Majesty's Government do in such a case?" And I proceeded to suggest a certain course of action. When the present Administration came into office, I anticipated that my letter of April 27th, as well as a previous one of March 28th, would have been communicated to Lord Stanley. I have reason to believe that it was not so, or that, if it was, the communication was made officially, in which case it would of course have shared the fate of my previous communications to the Foreign Office. It is perhaps well that it should have been so; for the contents of my letters were not likely to be appreciated either by the Foreign Secretary or by the public without a previous thorough knowledge of all the facts. At the present moment my suggestions would be out of place; but the time may yet come when they will be deserving of consideration.

The intelligence which we may shortly expect to receive from Abyssinia will be fraught with interest, as regards not only the fate of the British captives, but also the destinies of that country, as resulting from the conduct of its present ruler, and likewise from the movements of the princes of Tigre and Shoa and their French allies.

As matters now stand it would appear that all that England has been doing in Abyssinia during the last

* See page 226.

twenty years has been to no good purpose, and that in fact we are politically in a worse position than we were when Mr. Plowden was appointed Consul in Abyssinia; for our only alliance is with the Emperor Theodore in his present crippled state,—and even that alliance is not from choice, but is forced on us by an anxiety to get our unfortunate countrymen and others out of his hands; whilst France has not only obtained a settlement on the sea-coast at the southern extremity of Abyssinia, but is likely now to obtain one also in the north, through her alliance with the rising sovereign of Tigre, who will perhaps eventually become the ruler of the whole of Abyssinia.

In conclusion then I do not see that I can do otherwise than reiterate the closing words of my pamphlet, ‘The French and English in the Red Sea,’ published more than four years ago* :—

“Such are the interested but at the same time en-

* This was in fact only a repetition of the warning I gave in a letter to Viscount Palmerston, dated August 21st, 1851, now more than fifteen years ago. My words at that time were these:—“At the present moment, England appears to have gained the ascendency in Egypt, but we have no right to expect that this will always be the case; and, even while it lasts, *it may and doubtless will only lead to efforts on the part of France to acquire a counterpoise in the south.* Any attempts in that quarter might, however, be effectually prevented, and at a trifling outlay, were only suitable measures at once adopted. If, on the contrary, such measures are delayed, they may at a future period become difficult, if not impracticable. And as, on account of our Indian possessions; it is absolutely essential that British influence should continue to preponderate in Egypt; and as, consequently, it will be imperative on our nation to proceed even to the last extremities for the maintenance of that preponderance,—if not, indeed, in order to regain it after it shall have been lost; we may, in the result, be forced to atone for *present* neglect by the sacrifice of millions of treasure and tens of thousands of human lives.”

lightened views of France, which she will continue to carry out by all the means in her power, and (as is manifest) without being over-scrupulous as to the character of those means. England, on the other hand, after intermeddling most needlessly and mischievously in the affairs of Abyssinia, appears now to be simply drifting with the current of events, which she knows not how to stem. Circumstances will, however, be sooner or later such as to force her to intervene with an armed hand, and (as she usually does) to atone for past incapacity and neglect by the sacrifice of millions of treasure and tens of thousands of human lives."

APPENDIX.

I.

*Letter from DR. BEKE to VISCOUNT PALMERSTON, G.C.B.,
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated April 4th,
1848.*

[Referred to in pages 22 and 263.]

MY LORD,

Referring to the letter which I had the honour of addressing to your Lordship on the 25th ultimo*, I now feel it to be my duty to offer a few remarks on the subject of the policy which, during a number of years past, would appear to have been adopted by the British Government with regard to Abyssinia; since it is not improbable that the effects of that policy would exercise some influence on any operations that might be attempted to be carried out in accordance with the suggestions contained in my said letter.

When Mr. Salt undertook his mission to Abyssinia in the year 1810, he became acquainted with a young native chief named Sabagádis, of whose disposition and talents he was induced to form a high opinion, and whose future elevation he foretold. Mr. Salt's prognostications were so far fulfilled, that, in 1818, subsequently to the death of Ras Walda Selásye (the

* [* This was a letter on the subject of the Victualling of an Army in the Red Sea, addressed simultaneously to Lord Palmerston and to the late Duke of Wellington, who was then Commander-in-Chief.]

prince of Tigre, to whom the British Envoy had delivered the presents originally destined for the Emperor), Sabagádis acquired the rule of that province, which he retained about thirteen years. But, in the beginning of the year 1831, he was defeated in battle and slain by the united forces of Ras Márye and Dedjatj Ubye; and on this event the latter prince assumed the government of Tigre, which he has since retained, in addition to his hereditary province of Semyen, to the west of the river Tákkazye.

The friendship between Mr. Salt and Dedjatj Sabagádis was lasting; and it would appear to have formed the groundwork of all the relations (with the exception of Major Harris's mission to Shoa) which have since been maintained between England and Abyssinia. As long as Sabagádis lived, he was doubtless deserving of the friendship entertained towards him not only by the British Government but by all British travellers in Abyssinia. But his rule of Tigre was one of force, not of right. It was established by himself, and died with him. In its subsequent relations, therefore, with Abyssinia, the true policy of England was to have cultivated the friendship of that chief's successor *de facto*. Instead of which a morbid feeling has arisen in favour of the family of Sabagádis; and the kindly sentiments towards that prince, which were originated by Mr. Salt, have been transferred to his children and relatives, and fostered in a most undue manner by Mr. Salt's dependent and adherent, Mr. Coffin, who has taken up his residence in Abyssinia. It is not intended to impute to that individual improper motives for his partisanship in favour of the family of Sabagádis, but simply to explain the origin of the existing prejudices against the actual ruler of Tigre.

This hostile feeling against Ubye has likewise been promoted by other circumstances of an entirely independent nature. Dr. Gobat, the present Bishop of Jerusalem, was the first Protestant missionary to Abyssinia in the time of Dedjatj Sabagádis, by whom he was very favourably received.

That able and prudent missionary was most careful not to offend the prejudices of the ignorant native priesthood. His successors in the mission, who visited Northern Abyssinia in the time of Dedjatj Ubye, were, however, not always so guarded, so that they soon excited the hostility of the priests; and as Ubye never had any special reason to be favourable to the British missionaries—or it may rather be said that he had cause to be opposed to them, seeing that British sympathies have always been exhibited in favour of Sabagádis's family, who have been constantly in rebellion against his government—it is not at all surprising that he should have felt no inclination to interfere between our missionaries and their enemies. The consequence has been that they have been compelled to abandon the country.

From this cause the missionaries have joined in the cry of Mr. Salt's party against Ubye—the usurper, the tyrant, the oppressor, as he is called. But the condemners of this prince have omitted to say that his title is at least as good as that of his predecessor; that while Sabagádis held possession of Tigre barely thirteen years, Ubye has kept it upwards of seventeen years*, in spite of the incessant efforts of the various members of Sabagádis's family, whom the leniency of this "tyrant" has alone prevented him from crushing long ago; that it is, in fact, to this constant state of rebellion, which (it is to be feared) has to a certain extent been encouraged by the English, that the unsettled and distressed condition of Tigre is mainly attributable; and that, as regards Ubye's character, whether as a prince or as a man, it will bear comparison with that of the much-lauded Sabagádis or any other of the princes of Abyssinia.

Such, at least, is the opinion entertained respecting the reigning sovereign of Tigre by travellers of all nations except England; and this brings me to the point to which I would

* [Ubye had held rule in Tigre twenty-four years, when he was conquered by Kassai, as narrated in page 33.]

desire more especially to direct your Lordship's attention. In consequence of the unfriendly feelings thus entertained by the English and Protestants generally towards Dedjatj Ubye, that prince has been abandoned to French and Roman Catholic influences. *It is his favour that all French agents and travellers have sought to cultivate; it is he to whom presents have on more than one occasion been sent by the late Government of France, and with whom diplomatic relations have been entered into by that Government; while it is in his territories, in which our Protestant missionaries have been unable to keep their footing, that a Roman Catholic mission, emanating from the Rue du Bac in Paris, has firmly and (as it would seem) permanently established itself.*

The dominions of Dedjatj Ubye extend from Massówah at least 160 miles to the west and south. In the accompanying Map their approximate limits are represented by a red shade, from which it will be seen that, without passing through them, no communication whatever can be held between the port of Massówah and any portion of Abyssinia. Hence it is manifest that, if it be deemed expedient to establish relations of any kind with that country through Massówah, it is in the first place essential to cultivate the friendship of the sovereign whose dominions surround that port in every direction.

It is much to be feared that these matters have not been placed before your Lordship in a proper light: otherwise the fact would not be (as I regret to understand it is) that the first official interference of the British Government in the affairs of Northern Abyssinia since the time of Mr. Salt has been the commissioning of Mr. Plowden, the newly appointed Consul in that country, to be the bearer of presents to Dedjatj Ubye's great rival, Ras Ali—a chief who has no jurisdiction or authority within the dominions of the former, and whose residence, Debra Tabor, situate at least 250 miles from the coast, is only to be reached by Mr. Plowden's running the gauntlet through

the territories of Ubye*, at the risk of being stopped and plundered, and with the certainty of causing (and not without reason) the feelings of that prince to become more hostile than before to the British and the Protestants, and more favourable to the French and the Roman Catholics.

I do not believe that, in his heart, Ubye has a greater regard for one European nation than for another. Like the rest of the native rulers of Abyssinia, he principally seeks his own personal aggrandizement; and, if it were only made equally worth his while, he would doubtless be just as ready to favour the English as the French. It is to be hoped, therefore, that Her Britannic Majesty's Consul will have had authority given him to exercise his discretion with respect to the presents destined for Ras Ali; so that he may be at liberty to deliver them to Dedjatj Ubye, in the same way that Mr. Salt delivered to Walda Selásye, Ubye's predecessor in the government of Tigre, the presents of which he was the bearer to the Emperor of Abyssinia.

The Emperor was then in the power of Ras Guksa, the grandfather of Ras Ali, just as the reigning Emperor is at the present day in that of Ras Ali himself. It is true that Walda Selásye, who was then, as Ubye is now, the independent ruler of Tigre, had, at the time of Mr. Salt's first visit to Abyssinia in 1805, been the Ras or vizier of the empire; but at the time of that gentleman's diplomatic mission he was no longer so, having been dismissed by the new Emperor whom his rival, Ras Guksa, had placed on the throne at Gondar. Ras Guksa, as the actual Ras or vizier, was therefore the legal representative of the reigning Emperor, and consequently he was the person to whom, *de jure*, the presents to that sovereign from the British Government ought to have been delivered. The

[* In December 1862, Consul Cameron, when carrying the Emperor Theodore's letter to the Queen, was stopped in Tigre by a "rebel" chief, as described in page 82. In the spring of 1866, my wife and I could not pass through Tigre for the "rebels."]

only principle on which we may justify Mr. Salt's delivering these presents to Walda Selásye, the *dismissed* Ras or vizier of the nominal empire, but still the independent sovereign of the province of Tigre, is *that which at the present day is so decidedly recognized by the British Government—namely, the refraining from all interference in the domestic affairs of a foreign nation*, and simply entering into relations with the existing government *de facto*.

As regards the title of Ras or vizier, the truth is, that, in the present disorganized condition of Abyssinia, that title is just as nominal as that of Emperor. Any chief who is able to march on Gondar, the capital, and with the concurrence of the Abúna or Coptic Bishop, to place a new puppet Emperor on the throne, may receive that dignity at his hands. The relative position of Dedjatj Ubye and Ras Ali is most correctly expressed in the following answer, given to King Louis Philippe by one of the native Abyssinians who accompanied Lieutenant Lefebvre to Paris with presents from the former prince:—"Le Roi nous demanda quel était le chef le plus puissant de notre pays, si Oubié était Dedjasmatche par la volonté de Ras Ali, ou par son droit seul. Nous répondîmes que l'un et l'autre n'avait de droit que par la force; qu'il existait un empereur en titre, qui avait bien tout le droit, mais sans force pour le soutenir."

Such is simply the state of the case. Each provincial governor in Abyssinia (and the King of Shoa is *de jure* nothing more) is *de facto* an independent sovereign; and THE TRUE POLICY OF ENGLAND CLEARLY IS TO RECOGNIZE EACH SEPARATELY IN HIS OWN DOMINIONS. This is the more essential in the case of Ubye, the Dedjazmatj (Duke) of Tigre and Semyen. *He is the potentate de facto, with whom alone we should be brought into connexion in the event of an establishment, whether consular or otherwise, being formed at Massowah; and the recognition of him simply in that capacity would not implicate us with any of the native rulers, nor mix us up with the*

internal affairs of the country. To enter into friendly relations with Ras Ali or any other of the princes of Northern Abyssinia would, on the contrary, be virtually an offensive alliance against Dedjatj Ubye.

My long residence in Abyssinia and my yet longer study of the history of that country, both before and since my journey thither, justify me in forming a decided opinion on the subject of the present letter. I am persuaded that I have no need to apologize to your Lordship for the freedom with which I have ventured to express that opinion.

I have the honour, &c.

II.

Proposal for a Tram-road between the Cotton-fields of Ethiopia and the Coast of the Red Sea.

[Referred to in page 239.]

It is proposed to construct a Tram-road from the coast of the Red Sea, near the port of Suwákin, in about 19° north latitude, to the valley of the Upper Nile, near the junction of the Atbara with the main stream, for the purpose of affording a ready access to and outlet from the extensive Cotton-fields of Ethiopia, and otherwise opening up the trade with the southernmost portion of the dominions of the Pasha of Egypt.

The length of the proposed Road would be about 225 English statute miles, the whole being within the territories of the Pasha, except a few miles on the sea-coast, subject to the Turkish Government*.

From the nature of the country, the construction of such a Tram-way would be of simple and inexpensive character. There do not appear to be any engineering difficulties to

[* This coast has since been transferred to Egypt, as is mentioned in page 134.]

encounter or heavy works to construct. From a comparison of the measurements of various travellers who have ascended the Nile, the elevation of the bed of the river at El Mukheirriff, just below the junction of the Atbara, is 1082 English feet above the sea. This, on the estimated length of 225 statute miles, gives rather less than 5 feet per mile, or about 1 in 1000, for the general inclination from west to east between the two extremities of the line. The intervening country partakes, more or less, of this general inclination, without being traversed by mountain-ranges, or indeed by any elevation of importance in the line of the proposed communication.

This latter point is established by the peculiar natural character of the locality. The river Atbara (the ancient Astaboras) receives, at a short distance above its junction with the Nile, a tributary called Khor-el-Gash, which, though in the dry season it ceases almost if not entirely to flow, spreads its waters during the rains over the flat country of Taka or El-Gash, situate to the south-west of Suwákin, at a short distance from the sea-coast. These waters when at their highest find two outlets, the one being north-west towards the river Atbara, while the other turns off north-eastward to the Red Sea, near Suwákin*.

In the year 1852 two French travellers, MM. de Malzac and Vayssière, following the course of the valley running from Fillik in the north of Taka to Tokár, a Turkish military post about thirty miles south of Suwákin, found it to carry down to the Red Sea during the rains a portion of the waters from Taka. It is evidently this valley which is intended by M. Linant, the Pasha of Egypt's engineer-in-chief, who, when alluding, in a conversation with Sir John Bowring (see his 'Re-

* This remarkable fact, which affords an instance of the natural phenomenon of the bifurcation of a river high up its course, as exemplified in the Cassiquiare of South America, was known to the Egyptian geographer Artemidorus more than 2000 years ago.

port on Egypt and Candia'), to the Abyssinian tradition that art might stop the course of a portion of the waters of the Nile or direct them into a different channel, expressed the opinion that the Atbara might easily be turned into the Red Sea at Suwákin, for the reason that it passes over plains and sands, and that the remains of a bed or canal, already traced by human hands, exist from the river to the coast*.

This, then, appears to afford the natural course for a road from the sea-coast upwards as far as the plains. Once arrived there, the entire country through which the Nile, the Atbara, and the Khor-el-Gash flow, is so perfectly flat, that the fall of the Nile has been ascertained to be only 8 inches per mile, which is equivalent to an inclination of 1 in 7500, being practically a dead level.

Such, approximatively, would be the line of the proposed Tram-way. Its precise course has to be determined by means of a special and accurate survey.

The country which the Tram-road is intended to serve has next to be considered. It is, in a general way, that portion of North-eastern Africa contiguous to the shores of the Red Sea, lying south of Egypt and Nubia and within the limits of the tropical rains. By the ancients it was called "Ethiopia above Egypt"—though this designation comprised also the country lying more to the south, now known as Abyssinia, to which, however, on the present occasion it is unnecessary to allude further.

Though for ages past these regions have remained neglected and almost unknown, it is nevertheless certain that in former

* The celebrated Albuquerque proposed to draw off the waters of the Nile in this direction, so as to prevent their flowing down into Egypt. The particulars of this scheme are related in my work, 'The Sources of the Nile,' p. 89 *seq.* [At the Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at Nottingham in 1866, I read, in Section E, on August 22nd, a paper "On the Possibility of Diverting the Waters of the Nile into the Red Sea."]

times they were famous for the cotton they produced. In proof of this it will be sufficient to refer to Pliny, who in his 'Natural History' tells us that "Ethiopia, the country adjoining Egypt, possesses scarcely any trees of importance, except those bearing wool,"—a statement which the writer explains in a subsequent passage, where he says more explicitly that "the higher parts of Egypt, towards Arabia, produce a certain shrub or bush, which some call *gossypium* and others *xylon*, whence the flax made from it is called *xylina* (*i. e.* tree-flax). This plant is but small, and it bears a fruit resembling a filbert, from the inner cocoon (*bombyx*) of which is spun a downy thread, with which there is nothing comparable for whiteness or softness. Hence, garments made of it are much esteemed by the Egyptian priests."

In Egypt it is traditional that, from time immemorial, there has existed in the regions whence flow the waters of the Nile a fine quality of cotton, only known from the specimens of native manufacture occasionally brought to Cairo by the *gellabs* or slave-dealers, some of which are very beautiful and of the purest white, the weft-yarn being equal to the count of No. 80, and the warp to that of No. 120.

It does not appear, however, that any use was made of the cotton of Ethiopia as an article of commerce till about forty years ago, when the following remarkable occurrence took place:—

"A Turkish officer named Mahò Bey, who had been governor of Dongola and Sennár, and who had brought down various seeds of Ethiopic plants, which he cultivated in his garden at Cairo, about the year 1820 received a friendly visit from M. Jumel (a Frenchman well known in New York, where he resided some years); and in the course of his hospitalities, Mahò Bey took him round the garden. The attention of Jumel was attracted by the appearance of a tree bearing cotton-pods, whose growth and produce were equally new to him; but, without saying anything which might raise Mahò Bey's suspicions

as to the value of the discovery, Jumel gleaned all the information the Bey possessed on the subject, and procured from him some seeds of the same plant.

“Jumel made his calculations, and presented to the Pasha a project for increasing his revenues, for which he asked 20,000 dollars. The Pasha consented, if the scheme should succeed. But, after many delays, Jumel was compelled to seek less brilliant but more solid results. Associating himself with a Cairo merchant, they took a small lot of ground at the village of Matereeyeh, near the Obelisk of Heliopolis, and commenced a small plantation. The produce in 1820 was three bales, which were shipped to Trieste [or, according to another account, to Marseilles]; and the advices were highly satisfactory. New arrangements were made. Jumel took the direction of the cotton-plantations, which at this time were established on the Pasha's account throughout Lower Egypt; and, buoyed up with magnificent illusions of personal benefit, he brought large territories into cultivation, continuing for three years these operations.

“The time came, however, when, *having brought to the Pasha a mighty increase of revenue, and having thereby mainly contributed to his subsequent aggrandizement*, Jumel sought to realize his long-cherished hopes; but, partaking of the lot of most of those Europeans who have served Mohammed Ali with fidelity, he was flattered, harassed, and deluded, till, in 1824, he died insolvent, or little better.

“The year 1822 produced about 30,000 cantars of the ‘Jumel’ cotton, the staple of which was remarkably fine, but more unequal and less clean than that of the ensuing years. Rude presses were constructed for packing the cotton at the villages; but as the machinery was defective, some of the Alexandrian merchants brought hydraulic presses, with which they caused the bales to be pressed again aboard the respective ships”*.

* Gliddon's ‘Memoir on the Cotton of Egypt,’ pp. 11-13.

After this, the cultivation of Ethiopian cotton increased so rapidly in Egypt, that in the year 1824 the quantity exported, being the growth of the preceding year (1823), amounted to 148,276 bales of 219 lbs. each, or upwards of thirty-two millions of pounds; which, at the government price of that year ($\$15\frac{1}{2}$ per cantar), represented no less a sum than £848,479 sterling! And this was the produce of an *exotic* plant, of which a stranger had accidentally seen a specimen growing in a garden at Cairo only three years previously!

The rapid increase in the growth of cotton in America has been frequently made the subject of remark. But what was it compared with that of the "Jumel" cotton? In America, 1200 lbs. were first produced in the year 1784. In 1802, the yield only amounted to twenty-seven millions of pounds. That is to say, the American cotton-trade had not in eighteen years increased so much as that of Ethiopian cotton in Egypt in only three years. Had the latter trade gone on increasing in the ratio in which it began, it would ere long have equalled that in American cotton at the present day. But, like most branches of industry under Mohammed Ali Pasha, it soon retrograded; though, from a report made by Mr. G. R. Haywood, Secretary of the Cotton Supply Association, when in Egypt on his way to India, which appeared in 'The Times' of August 16th last, the export of Egyptian cotton, which in 1856-1857 was only 91,572 bales, has in the season of 1860-1861 increased to 142,759 bales, or nearly equal to what it was in 1824.

There can be no doubt that, by improved cultivation and by affording facilities to the growers, the production of cotton in Lower Egypt might be largely extended. But the present Viceroy expressed to Mr. Haywood his fears that "he would not have it in his power to do much directly to induce an extensive cultivation" of that article, adding significantly that "when the *fellah* or cultivator found cotton to pay him better than any other crop, he was now ready from self-interest to

grow as much as possible ;” which implied also that, as long as other crops paid better than cotton, they were not likely to be abandoned merely for the sake of supplying our manufacturers.

In Egypt, where the cotton-plant is an exotic, its culture is entirely artificial, besides having to compete with other articles of produce which are of absolute necessity. In Ethiopia above Egypt, on the contrary, where it is indigenous, it flourishes even without the need of cultivation, and its production, with comparatively little labour or attention, might be rendered almost unlimited. The quality, too, is of the finest kind; for it is here that Mahò Bey obtained the seeds from which the “Jumel” cotton was raised in Lower Egypt.

Without seeking to ascertain what extent of country within or near the dominions of the Viceroy of Egypt might be made to produce cotton for the European markets, it will be sufficient for the purposes of the projected Ethiopian Railway to look merely to the productive powers of the country of Taka, which has already been repeatedly named, and of the neighbouring peninsula or “island” of Meroe or Atbara, between the river of that name and the Nile.

In modern times Taka was first visited in the year 1814 by the traveller Burckhardt, who gives the following particulars respecting it:—“The country of Taka, or, as it is called by its inhabitants, El Gash, is famous all over these countries for its extreme fertility. The reason why Taka is so fertile and has become so populous is, its regular inundation. About the latter end of June, or sometimes not till July—for the period does not seem so fixed as that of the rise of the Nile—large torrents coming from the S. and S.E. pour over the country, and in the space of a few weeks (or according to some in eight days) cover the whole surface with a sheet of water, varying in depth from 2 to 3 feet; these torrents are said to lose themselves in the eastern plain, after inundating the country;

but the waters remain upwards of a month in Taka, and, if I am to believe the reports of several persons who had seen the Nile and could draw a comparison, the waters on subsiding leave a thick slime or mud upon the surface, similar to that left by the Nile" *.

A more recent traveller, M. Werne, speaks in the following terms of the great fertility of Taka, and the nature of the principal articles which it produces:—"The cotton-plantations about the camp at Aronga [near Kassela-el-Lus] are of considerable extent, and, notwithstanding the present drought, look healthy and of a fresh green, with which there is nothing to compare. Still, for so large a nation as the Haddendas, these plantations are but trifling, when compared with the great extent of the *durra*† fields But what might not be cultivated in, and produced by, this splendid country, which—through the moisture caused by brooks springing out of the earth, and through its regular yearly irrigation by rain, and by the inundation of the streams which descend from the Abyssinian mountains—is so exceedingly fertile that, in spite of violent storms and the frequent catching fire of the woods, it brings forth in an instant (as it were) trees of considerable size, *durra*—without manure or cultivation—15 and 20 feet in height, with full ears sixteen and eighteen fold, and *Cotton which grows 5 feet in a single year!* And yet, what does this country produce at present? Nothing but this *durra* and cotton, and a few small beans! But all kinds of grain would doubtless flourish here, so that this country might become the granary of Hedjaz, which province is entirely destitute of corn, and is only saved from famine by the gratuitous supply of the entire yearly crops of the neighbourhood of Kenneh, or, when these are insufficient, of those of the districts of Siút and Manfallút in Egypt. Indigo, too, might be grown here quite as well as in Egypt, where its

* 'Travels in Nubia,' pp. 348-349.

† *Durra, Doura*, a species of *Sorghum*.

cultivation is considerable; so also rice and sugar, which latter article, on account of the quantity of wood that grows here, might easily be refined, whereas, at present, it has to be brought from India; likewise tobacco, oil, flax, &c. The cultivation of the date-palm might also be made a matter of great importance At present almost the only dealings are in honey, butter, and *durra*, which articles are exchanged for salt with the people living near the Red Sea; but the trade might be extended to a great many other articles. The herds of cattle, which even now are numerous, and might with a little attention be very much increased, as their keep is so easy, would furnish hides for sale without number; whilst, by improving the breed of the sheep, no small profit might be derived from their wool, though at present their flesh alone is made use of *But, above all, Cotton wool might be rendered a most important article of commerce, though its present insignificant cultivation does not even suffice for the home consumption. When it is seen how plentifully and how beautifully this plant grows, even with the present careless cultivation, it is easy to imagine what immense quantities might be produced if more attention were paid to it. Here there is no need, as in Egypt, to provide for its regular irrigation—in itself an immense labour; in addition to which, the greater part of the inhabitants know something at least of its treatment, which is an incalculable advantage for a people who are so wedded to their primitive customs, habits, and occupations**.

As regards the country beyond Taka to the west, it is described by a recent traveller, Mr. Hamilton, in equally favourable terms:—"The Island of Meroe presents a uniform character; its surface is formed by an immensely thick layer of alluvial soil, which only requires irrigation in order to yield larger crops of every valuable production of a warm climate than the whole of Egypt can supply. The two rivers seem intended to feed a network of canals, which would transform

* 'Feldzug nach Sennaar,' &c., pp. 99-102.

the desert into a paradise; but for such an end capital, industry, and intelligence are all wanted. Cotton, sugar, wheat, and indigo may all be successfully cultivated here, especially the first and last, which grow wild. The regularity of the climate seems to promise a certainty of unfailing crops of these articles, and to render this the most favourable country in the world for their production”*.

In another place Mr. Hamilton says:—“Throughout this country I have found the natives, though very timid, good-natured and obliging when caught; but to catch them is not easy. They are certainly a very superior race to the Egyptian *fellah*,—superior in communicative intelligence, and untainted with his shameless rapacity. I do not remember to have been asked for a *backshish* in the whole of Soudan; and what was given was always received with frank thanks, as if welcome but not due. A more humane government is all that is wanting to raise this country to a state of great prosperity. *The Atbara is full of islands, offering thousands of acres of the richest land to cultivation almost without labour; and a network of canals intersecting the Island of Meroe, the triangle formed by the Atbara, the Rahad, and the Nile, would more than double the productive soil of Egypt*”†.

If, then, the late Mohammed Ali Pasha, within the short period of three years, was able to create (even though by unjustifiable means) a yearly revenue of nearly a million sterling from the growth in Lower Egypt of “Ethiopian” Cotton, it cannot be doubted that the present Viceroy, Said Pasha, might derive a much larger income from these southern provinces, were the cultivation of their indigenous Cotton and that of the other productions of their fertile soil properly fostered, and the transport of the produce itself to the sea-coast facilitated by means of a road such as is proposed.

The formation of this line of transport would have another

* ‘Sinai, the Hedjaz and Soudan,’ p. 369.

† *Ibid.* p. 280.

most important and beneficial result. It would soon become the channel for the commerce of Sennár and the surrounding countries, and would eventually bring into connexion with the sea-coast the most extensive, most fertile, and most populous regions of Intertropical Africa.

The distance of Khartum, on the Nile, from the shores of the Red Sea, is little more than 400 miles, through a fertile and well-watered country; whereas from Egypt it is double the distance, by a desert and difficult road. Khartum itself is on the high road to Central Africa; and it is a fact pregnant with inferences, that the greatest movement of the population of Africa is from east to west and from west to east—pilgrims from the remotest regions of Western and North-western Africa traversing the entire breadth of the continent on their way to and from the Caaba and the tomb of their prophet and lawgiver. This is, indeed, the road which has unalterably been trodden during countless ages; for it existed long before the time of Mohammed. The pilgrims who frequent Mecca are almost of necessity merchants, trading from place to place, often as the sole means of enabling them to perform their journey. It is by this means that the Mohammedan religion has attained its great development throughout Central Africa—not by any zealous and expensive, or, indeed intentional, propagandism, but by the casual communication between these Moslem merchant pilgrims and the rude pagans through whose countries their route happens to pass; and it is by the same simple means that our manufactures, and with them eventually our civilization and our religion, will find their way into the heart of Africa.

CHARLES BEKE.

Bekesbourne House, Kent,
1st October, 1861.

III.

*Letter from CONSUL CAMERON to the EMPEROR OF
ABYSSINIA.*

[Referred to in page 71.]

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY, Godjam, Abyssinia,
October 22, 1862.

I have had the honour to receive your Majesty's message of this morning, informing me that I had better leave at once for Massowah, in order to ascertain, for your Majesty's information, whether I would be able or not to pass certain Ambassadors or messengers, whom you^care anxious to send to England.

On this point I believe myself justified in repeating the reply I made to your Majesty on the same subject in my last interview, viz., that if Egypt was at war with your Majesty, it would be impossible to pass such Ambassadors or messengers through without her consent; if, on the contrary, there was peace, that I could conceive no possible obstacle.

I will, however, send a messenger immediately to Aden, informing the Resident there of your intention, and requesting him to send you an answer direct in Arabic, without reference to me.

Your Majesty ought, however, now to inform me of the number of people of which your Majesty's Embassy, if it goes, will consist, the exact date at which it will be at Massowah, or, if you wish, Halai, and the character of the presents they are to take,—as, if there are any horses intended to be sent (as I hear), it will be necessary for me to write this beforehand, so as to insure accommodation, if indeed it is possible to afford accommodation, on board a steamer.

It might be desirable, too, to speak with me as to the objects of the Embassy, supposing them to be more than what you told me loosely the other day, viz. to appeal to England with regard to certain differences between yourself and Turkey, as

also Egypt. We might then consult on those differences, before your taking so serious a step as to bring them before an European Power.

My being an European, and one versed in some degree in public affairs as conducted among us, may perhaps assist you.

Besides which, I may remind your Majesty that my appointment has obliged me to think much over everything connected with Abyssinia.

If your Majesty wishes much business to be done by talking, it would be fitting to choose such a person as the head of the Embassy as may be thoroughly versed in the matters to be spoken about, and one who would give a favourable opinion of the intelligence and civilization of your people, as well as of your Majesty's character, both of which have been greatly misrepresented by your Majesty's enemies.

The accompanying retinue also ought to be the smallest possible, a sufficient retinue being always to be obtained in England. I would say that one or at most two heads of the Embassy, and an interpreter, with a Secretary if necessary, would be amply sufficient, each with a single native servant.

Having given your Majesty my opinion with regard to an Embassy, as far as I can do so in writing, there is only one point further to discuss with your Majesty, viz., whether your Majesty wishes to avail yourself of my being here to make out a draft of a treaty for the consideration of my Queen; which, if your Majesty thinks proper, can be signed conditionally, and notice of it now sent on by me, while the draft itself, with the provisional signatures, can accompany your Ambassador.

I have a copy of the treaty made through Ras Ali with the former Emperor, which can be made the base of such a document, if your Majesty wishes; and I now send it you, with certain alterations, for your Majesty's consideration.

As I am anxious to finish whatever I have to say to your Majesty in this letter, as far as I can do so in writing, I may observe at once that I know that the points on which your

Majesty made a difficulty in your conversation with Mr. Plowden on this subject were :—

1. The acceptance of a Consul.
2. If he were accepted, whether he should have jurisdiction as agreed in the former Emperor's treaty.

On the first point, I can only ask your Majesty whether Mr. Plowden's stay here was not a positive advantage, in so far as he acted as a mediator and friend generally, but particularly as a protector to the unfortunate Abyssinian tribes laid open to Egypt, while those who ought to have looked after them were cutting each other's throats; whether he did not testify his anxiety by word and deed that your Majesty, as the most noble and enlightened of Abyssinian Chiefs, should become sole master; lastly, whether he ever showed a disposition to do anything contrary to the interest, honour, or independence of Abyssinia.

Some arrangement at any rate on this point will be necessary, if your Majesty really wishes to keep up a close friendship with England. *I feel certain, too, that if English artisans were to come here, as I have heard is your Majesty's wish, it would be impossible for them to stay unless there was an officer of some kind, either Envoy or Consul, to look after them.*

It would be well if, now that there is an opportunity, your Majesty gave a frank decision on this subject, particularly as your Majesty has now had many years to think it over.

As regards a Consul's flying a flag, this is by no means necessary; nor would my Government even wish it, if, as I hear, your people might misunderstand it.

In regard to jurisdiction by a Consul, this is in your Majesty's hands, not ours, to decide. England wants to ensure justice and good treatment to her subjects, and nothing more.

If your Majesty can explain to our Government what I believe to be your Majesty's opinion, viz. that such separate

jurisdiction would be impossible to carry out, and is also unnecessary where the laws are so mild as in Abyssinia*, this would be sufficient for the present.

But it seems to me that a few hours' conversation would settle these matters either one way or the other.

As your Majesty is now by God's grace master of Shoa, I would gladly know whether your Majesty has any intention of opening a trade through Zeyla in opposition to Massowah. In the meantime, I can only point it out to your Majesty as worthy of attention.

If I could have some assurance with regard to the stopping of the Slave Trade in this country, which has again been opened (I believe) without your Majesty's knowledge, I feel certain that satisfactory information on that point would be received with much pleasure by my Government.

A clause in the treaty on this subject would be still better.

I can only thank your Majesty now for the courteous manner in which your Majesty has received the presents I brought, of which, as well as of the distinguished manner in which I have hitherto been treated, I shall write immediately to England.

It is my duty, however, to add that, if your Majesty wishes me to stay until I have finished everything thoroughly, I can dismiss my people if they are too many for a camp, and stay till you have quite done with me.

I owe it to my Government to tell you this.

I am now about to write to the Pasha of Massowah, telling him that if he commits any aggression on those under your Majesty's rule from where he is on the coast, I feel certain that his conduct will be greatly disapproved of by my Government.

I will also write to my Government, mentioning your Majesty's wise resolution not to give either Egypt or Turkey any ground

* [It must always be borne in mind that the Roman 'Civil Law' is the law of Abyssinia.—C. B.]

for attack, which I feel sure will do much to confirm its opinion of your Majesty's prudence as well as courage.

Your Majesty has many enemies besides the Turks and Egyptians, who will rejoice in putting your Majesty in the wrong, and who will rejoice especially if your Majesty gives them an opportunity of doing so.

I have the honour, &c.

IV.

Four Letters from DR. BEKE to EARL RUSSELL, K.G., Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, dated respectively May 19th, and July 7th, 21st, and 22nd, 1865.

[Referred to in pages 18 and 161.]

MY LORD,

May 19th, 1865.

In the letter which I had the honour to address to your Lordship on the 29th ultimo, I took the liberty of suggesting that if the existing difficulties in the way of obtaining the liberation of the British captives in Abyssinia could not be directly met, they might, at all events, be turned; and at the interview with which I was favoured by your Lordship on the 8th instant, I briefly stated the course which, in my humble opinion, ought to be adopted.

Your Lordship seemed, however, disposed to leave the business still in the hands of Mr. Rassam.

Should all the endeavours of that gentleman prove unavailing, the time will at length arrive when, unless it be determined to abandon the captives to their fate, Her Majesty's Government must decide on adopting some other measures.

It would scarcely be consistent with the dignity of the

British nation that a Mission on a larger and more magnificent scale than that of Mr. Rassam's should now replace it; for, as your Lordship argued in the House of Lords, when replying to Lord Chelmsford's inquiry, "The obvious inference would be, that the way to obtain consideration and respect from this country would be to imprison one of our Consuls."

On the other hand, it is not to be expected the British Government will go to war with the Emperor of Abyssinia for the purpose of compelling him to set the captives free.

It would therefore really appear that there remains no practical method of surmounting the difficulty except by adopting a totally different line of conduct towards the refractory Monarch; and, with your Lordship's permission, I would now presume to state in detail the course which, in my humble judgment, it would be advisable to pursue in order to render him amenable to reason without, at the same time, compromising the British Government or affecting the dignity of the British nation.

It is now well understood that the Emperor Theodore's ill-treatment of Her Majesty's Consul and the other European prisoners has been mainly caused by the altered policy of the British Government with respect to the relations between Egypt and Abyssinia, and that the Abyssinian Monarch hopes to induce Her Majesty's Government to retrace their steps and to continue to afford him material aid against his enemies, as was virtually done while Mr. Consul Plowden was alive, that officer having been an active partisan of the Emperor, and having lost his life while bearing arms in his cause.

Circumstanced as England is with Egypt, it is impossible for the British Government to hold out to the Emperor Theodore the hope of his receiving the further countenance of this country in his disputes with Egypt, or of his obtaining material aid in any other respect, although the transmission to Massowah of 500 stand of arms as a ransom for Her Majesty's Consul might, by some persons, and even by the Egyptian

Government, be looked on as doing covertly what would be repudiated openly.

Nevertheless it would not be difficult, I believe, to make the Abyssinian Monarch understand that by the policy now proposed to be pursued towards him by the British Government, and recommended for his adoption, he might eventually attain the object he has so much at heart, inasmuch as by the cultivation of the arts of peace he would so aggrandize himself as to be able to cope effectually with his powerful neighbour,—leaving it, however, to the progress of events to guide his judgment as to whether the continuance of peace would not be more conducive to the permanent prosperity of himself, his dynasty, and his people, than a war which might result in the ruin and destruction of them all.

In the first place, then, I would represent to the Emperor Theodore that the immense increase of power and influence among European nations acquired by Egypt during the last few years had chiefly arisen from the extension given to the cultivation of cotton within the territories of the Viceroy; and I would represent to His Majesty that the plant which has thus suddenly caused the wealth of Egypt was introduced into that country from Upper Ethiopia only forty years ago, and that within his own dominions there are tracts of land more extensive than the whole of the cotton-grounds of Egypt, and far more fitted than the latter for the growth of the cotton plant, not only as being its native country, but also as lying within the limits of the tropical rains, and thus rendering unnecessary the great trouble and expense of artificial irrigation. And I would hope to have it in my power to convince the Sovereign of Abyssinia that if he desires to equal, or even to surpass, the Viceroy of Egypt in power, he must first seek to augment the material wealth and prosperity of his country and its inhabitants, by means similar to those so successfully adopted by the latter Potentate.

I would further represent to the Emperor of Abyssinia that

he possesses within his country other sources of wealth far greater than any enjoyed by the Ruler of Egypt, such, in fact, as have so largely contributed to make England what she is. These are iron and coal.

The former article is well known to exist in unlimited quantities throughout the whole of Abyssinia, and in so pure a state as to require little more than "rolling out," it being used by the native smiths in the manufacture of weapons of war and of agricultural and domestic implements.

The existence of coal in various parts of Abyssinia has long been asserted by travellers in that country—by myself as far back as 1840, when I reported on the subject to Captain Haines, then Political Agent at Aden; but it is only within the last few years that this has been established as a fact. In communications more recently made by me to the Board of Trade, and thence referred to your Lordship's Department, it is shown that coal of good quality exists within the district of Galeila, at a short distance from the entrance to the Red Sea; and there is reason for believing that it was the knowledge of the existence of this coal so near to the sea-shore that induced the French Government in 1862 to acquire possession of Obokh, on the Abyssinian coast, just outside the Straits of Babelmandeb.

But without taking into consideration this coal-field of Galeila, or others which are said to stretch along the line of coast northwards nearly to Massowah, and also south of the Bay of Tadjurrah, below the eastern flank of the high tableland of Shoa—all of which, though in common parlance said to be situate in Abyssinia, can hardly be regarded as lying within dominions of the Emperor Theodore—there is one extensive field which not only is situate in the heart of those dominions, but has been worked by the Emperor himself during several years past.

This coal-field lies at a distance of about fifty miles from Gondar, the capital of Abyssinia, and has been described by

several Europeans who have visited it. For a length of about three miles along the right bank of the River Gwang (the upper course of the Atbara), six seams of coal crop out, each having a uniform thickness of from 10 to 15 feet, the quality of the coal being very good, and fit for ordinary steam and other purposes, though, from its rapid combustion, it might not be suited for steam-vessels going long sea-voyages. Nor, were the quality fit, could it, like the Galeila coal, be rendered available for steamers in the Indian seas, as it lies at a distance of at least 200 miles from the sea-shore.

At present the only use made of this coal appears to be in the Imperial founderies, in which the European artisan missionaries and others are employed in casting mortars and shells, and in constructing other implements of war. But it may well be conceived what a mine of wealth is here present, if the Emperor and his people could be brought to appreciate it at its true value, and to apply it to useful purposes.

As by means of the cultivation of cotton in Abyssinia the Emperor Theodore might be shown how he could cope with Egypt, so by the proper application of the produce of his iron and coal mines, he might be led to the hope of being eventually able to rival even England herself. And if once brought to entertain such ideas, and whilst awaiting their realization, he might without difficulty be induced to see how he could lay both nations under obligation, and in a manner make them dependent on his favour, by permitting a line of electric telegraph to be carried across his dominions.

The Viceroy of Egypt is engaged in constructing a telegraph line from Cairo up the valley of the Nile as far as Khartum, the capital of the province of Sennar, with a branch to Kaselah; the capital of the province of Taka; by means of which not only will those remote possessions in the south be placed in immediate connexion with the seat of Government, but, from the fact that this line is a prolongation of that already existing between Egypt and Europe, it will result that about three-

fifths of a telegraphic communication between England and India (London and Kurrachee), by way of the Red Sea, will thereby be established.

Before this plan of the Viceroy of Egypt was known, I had suggested to Her Majesty's Government, in a 'Memorandum on the means of developing British commerce within the Red Sea, and of securing the communication between England and India,' dated November 12th, 1862, and submitted to your Lordship on the 27th of the same month, that the wires of the Red Sea telegraph line from India should be continued from the Straits of Babelmandeb, northward along the Abyssinian coast as far as Suwakin, and thence carried inland to Berber on the Nile, and so up the bank of that river to Cairo—thus forming a land-line the whole way from Babelmandeb to Alexandria, entirely over Turkish and Egyptian territory.

But taking into consideration the great stride which the Viceroy of Egypt is making in the desired direction—bearing also in mind the advance which during the last few years the Emperor Theodore has made towards the east and south-east by the conquest and annexation of the territories of the King of Shoa and the Chiefs of the Wollo Gallas—and having regard likewise to the hold which the Government of India, through Aden, is gaining on the Abyssinian coast, in consequence of the acquisition recently made by a British subject of the Galeila coal-field, as also of the settlement of the French at Obokh, I am now decidedly of opinion that the telegraphic communication between England and India, through Egypt and Aden, should and might easily be effected by continuing the Egyptian line from Khartum across Abyssinia to the sea-coast, in the immediate vicinity of the Island of Perim, and thence to Aden.

On the accompanying map I have marked the proposed line of telegraph; and in explanation of the same I would beg leave to state that the entire distance between Khartum and Aden

is (in round numbers) 850 geographical miles, which distance may be divided into four portions.

Of the first of these, being from Khartum to Kalabat, on the western frontier of Abyssinia, the length is 250 miles; the next, from Kalabat to Dowe, the great market-place on the eastern edge of the Abyssinian tableland, has a length of 300 miles; the third, from Dowe, across the country of the Dankali tribes, to the shore of the Red Sea opposite Perim, is 200 miles; whilst the last portion, from Perim to Aden, is 100 miles.

The condition of these several portions of the line is very different. The first, between Khartum and Kalabat, and the last, between Perim and Aden, forming together 350 miles, or about two-fifths of the whole length, would be respectively Egyptian and British; no further remarks, therefore, are requisite as regards them. Of the remaining 500 miles, the third portion, between the sea-coast and the eastern edge of the Abyssinian tableland, being 200 miles in length, may be regarded as being so far under the influence, if not the absolute control, of the British Governor of Aden on the one hand, and of the Emperor of Abyssinia on the other, that between the two, the road might be kept open as securely as it is among the tribes occupying the regions through which passes the Euphrates Valley Telegraph line to India.

As regards the second portion, of 300 miles, across Abyssinia itself, the road is already marked out by Nature and by the experience of the natives. It runs from Kalabat, by Wekhni, Gondar, and Debra Tabor, and thence, over the warter-parting between the rivers Takkazie and Bashilo, to Magdala, the impregnable fortress, arsenal, and State' prison, in the district of Warra Hemano, in which Captain Cameron and his companions are confined, from whence it continues to Dowe, in the adjoining district of Warrakallu.

It may here be remarked, parenthetically, that it would be in vain to look for Magdala in the ordinary maps of Abys-

sinia; and that in those few in which it is marked, it is altogether misplaced.

Availing themselves of the natural facilities of this road across Abyssinia, the native merchants have from time immemorial made use of it, in a greater or less degree, according to political circumstances, as the direct channel of communication between the sea-coast and the interior. In the 'Memoir on the Commerce of Abyssinia,' which I had the honour to submit to your Lordship's predecessor in office on the 9th of December, 1843, I dwelt particularly on this fact, and I pointed out the advantages that would result from the re-opening of this great commercial road, expressing the opinion that, whenever the political condition of Abyssinia should become more settled, we should doubtless see this road resume its pristine importance, and the commerce from the coast to the interior in great part pass by this channel.

Such, then, are the arguments that I would propose to employ when approaching the Emperor Théodore. I would support these arguments by presenting to him some cotton-gins, together with specimens of articles of British manufacture of various descriptions capable of being made from the cotton of Abyssinia if only he would stimulate the production of that article by his subjects.

I would further submit to the Emperor's inspection specimens of the infinite variety of articles that might be manufactured from the fine iron which his territories contain in such abundance.

Lastly, I would take with me an electric-telegraph apparatus, for the purpose of exhibiting and explaining to His Majesty the use and operation of this wonderful and, as to him it would appear, miraculous invention. And in order to make him more readily and fully appreciate the channel by which I should propose to connect Abyssinia with England and the other nations of Europe, I would not enter his country at all by the way of Massowah, but would adopt the road laid down on my

map as that of the proposed telegraph line, thus proving to him that the acquisition of Massowah is no longer indispensable as the channel of communication between Abyssinia and the civilized world.

I take for granted that it would be but proper to assure the Emperor Thepdore that Her Britannic Majesty's Government would exert every suitable influence over the Viceroy of Egypt to induce him to desist from further aggressions on the territories or dependencies of Abyssinia, and that the mediation of Her Majesty would even be offered, with a view to the settlement of existing questions between Egypt and Abyssinia, and the determination of an equitable frontier line between the two States.

On the liberation of the British Consul and the other captives, it might (should Her Majesty's Government so decide) be promised to the Emperor Theodore that a suitable Embassy should be forthwith dispatched to his Court, and that Her Majesty would, on Her side, be willing to receive an Envoy from His Majesty of Abyssinia, in accordance with the stipulations of the Treaty of November 2, 1849.

Such being the line of conduct which I should propose to adopt, I once more beg leave most respectfully to tender my humble services to Her Majesty's Government.

To obviate the objection that might be made that I am not of sufficiently elevated rank to be entrusted with such a Mission, and that I do not occupy any official position, I would take the liberty of reminding your Lordship that the late Richard Cobden, though holding no official post, was not thereby disqualified from acting as mediator between the two most powerful nations in the world; and as regards myself, without thinking for a moment of comparing myself with that distinguished individual, I may be permitted to state that I have already had the honour to serve the Crown as Acting Consul at Leipzig.

And as, further, it appears that so much importance is

attached to the wearing of a British uniform that a young subaltern officer, Lieutenant Prideaux, has been sent from Aden to Massowah to join Mr. Rassam, I trust it will not be regarded as presumptuous if I represent to your Lordship that I have for many years held the Commission, and am consequently entitled to wear the uniform, of a Deputy-Lieutenant, which (if I mistake not) gives me rank equivalent to that of a Lieut.-Colonel in the army.

I have, &c.

MY LORD, *

July 7th, 1865.

On several occasions I have ventured to express to your Lordship my readiness to be the medium of communication with the Emperor of Abyssinia, with a view to the liberation of Consul Cameron and his companions in captivity; but it would appear that Her Majesty's Government shrink from the responsibility of availing themselves of my services, lest I also should be made a prisoner or even put to death by the irritated Monarch.

Such being the case, I see no means of relieving Her Majesty's Government from their difficulty, except by my undertaking the task of approaching the Abyssinian Sovereign on my own personal responsibility. This I now beg leave to state unreservedly I am prepared to do; and further, I am content to visit the Abyssinian Court in the character of a private traveller not officially accredited, should such a course be deemed expedient.

Possessing, as I do, an acquaintance with all the circumstances and bearings of the case, I have not the slightest doubt of being able to bring His Abyssinian Majesty to see that, in imprisoning Consul Cameron, the British missionaries, and other Europeans, he has made a great mistake, and that, in order to put himself right with the British nation and with the whole Christian world, he must immediately set them free.

I have likewise no doubt of being able to convince His Majesty that the only effectual way to secure the integrity and stability of his empire, to preserve Christianity among his people, and to gain the friendship of England and all other European nations, is to cultivate the arts of peace in preference to those of war, and to develop the immense resources of his rich and fertile country,—showing him how he might most readily do this by the means pointed out in my letter to your Lordship of May 19th last, which is printed among the Papers laid before Parliament*.

Should my undertaking be crowned with success (with respect to which I do not entertain any apprehension), I should have had the gratification, not only of liberating the unfortunate captives, some of whom are my own personal friends, from their long imprisonment, but also of freeing Her Majesty's Government from a great embarrassment and the British nation from an equally great disgrace.

In the possible but most improbable alternative of failure, I should have no one to blame but myself; whilst Her Majesty's Government would truly be enabled to say that no means whatever had been neglected of bringing about a result which every friend of humanity must have so much at heart.

I have, &c.

MY LORD,

July 21st, 1865.

With reference to the letter which I had the honour to address to your Lordship on the 7th inst., expressing my readiness to go to Abyssinia on my own responsibility, with a view to the liberation of Her Majesty's Consul, Captain Cameron, and his companions in captivity in that country, I now beg leave to acknowledge the receipt of Mr. Layard's

[* Parl. Paper, 1865, 'Papers relating to the Imprisonment of British subjects in Abyssinia,' p. 11.]

letter of the 13th inst., in reply to the same; in which he states, by your Lordship's desire, that, if I proceed to Abyssinia as a private traveller, Her Majesty's Government cannot interfere in the matter, *but that your Lordship warns me that Her Majesty's Government are in possession of information derived from private sources, describing the cruel and merciless character of King Theodore, which would almost lead to the conclusion that he is not in his right mind.* Mr. Layard further informs me that, if I undertake this journey, Her Majesty's Government cannot hold themselves responsible for anything that may happen to me in Abyssinia, nor can they give me any authority whatever to enter into any political arrangements with the King on their behalf or to interfere in the political affairs of the country,—and that whatever I may choose to say to the King will therefore be the expression of my own sentiments and views, for which Her Majesty's Government will in nowise be responsible. And lastly, Mr. Layard represents to me the propriety of my making it clearly understood to King Theodore and his agents that I proceed to Abyssinia entirely as a private traveller, and that in no sense am I to be considered as an organ of Her Majesty's Government.

In taking due note of your Lordship's desires as thus conveyed to me, I would beg leave to represent that so desirous am I, for my own sake not to be considered as an organ of Her Majesty's Government, that I would hope to be excused for not even offering to be the bearer of despatches from your Lordship to Consul Cameron, on account of the extreme ill feeling which unhappily exists between the British Government and the Abyssinian Monarch. Mr. Layard, by your Lordship's direction, speaks of "the cruel and merciless character of King Theodore, which would almost lead to the conclusion that he is not in his right mind;" and, on the other hand, I learn from a letter from one of Consul Cameron's fellow captives, written at Magdala in April last, only three

months ago, that that monarch "considers the members of Her Britannic Majesty's Government"—I trust your Lordship will forgive me for daring even to repeat the words now lying written before me—"the greatest miscreants that ever breathed."

Under such circumstances your Lordship will perceive how necessary it is for me to avoid everything that might lead the irritated monarch to believe me to be a messenger (even though unrecognized) of Her Majesty's Government.

I have; &c.

MY LORD,

July 22nd, 1865.

In the letter which I had the honour to address to your Lordship on the 21st instant, I have ventured to suggest the inexpediency of my being the bearer of any despatches to Consul Cameron, on account of the extremely bad feeling which exists between Her Majesty's Government and the reigning Sovereign of Abyssinia, evinced by the offensive terms in which they express themselves with regard to each other.

Notwithstanding my unwillingness to run the risk of incurring the displeasure of the irritated monarch by acting as the medium between Her Britannic Majesty's Government and their unfortunate representative in Abyssinia, I would still desire not to reject the idea that, should your Lordship think fit, some indirect means of communicating with Consul Cameron might still be adopted. Only, even in that case, I should respectfully request it may be understood that I protest against anything being said or done which might in the slightest degree be likely to compromise myself or the success of my undertaking, and that I must reserve to myself the right, at my absolute discretion, to destroy without examination any papers whatever that might be committed to the charge of myself or anyone accompanying me.

This allusion to the possibility of my having to destroy papers delivered to me, induces me to report to your Lordship the fate of a despatch, addressed in 1839 by Viscount Palmerston, when Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to "His Highness, Sahela Döngöl, King of Abyssinia," which until now has remained unknown to Her Majesty's Government.

In the year 1837 (if I am correctly informed) Mr. Anthony Thomson D'Abbadie*, on the recommendation of the Royal Geographical Society, obtained from Viscount Palmerston a passport as a British subject born in Ireland, with which he travelled in Abyssinia; in visiting which country he professed to have scientific objects alone in view, and on more than one occasion he emphatically disclaimed, in print, all participation in political and religious matters, as he likewise denied the imputation of his being a Frenchman.

In the course of 1838, M. d'Abbadie and his brother Arnould were at Gondar, where they mixed themselves up in the affairs of the country, one of the results of which I would beg leave to relate in his own words, copied from the 'Athenæum' of January 27th, 1849. He there says, "I was, in 1839, the bearer of two Abyssinian letters, which I delivered to Lord Palmerston and Marshal Soult; and as the application was favourably received by both Governments, I was naturally intrusted with the appropriate answers. When, subsequently, Captain Haines impeded my voyage to Gondar by Tajurrah and Shoa, *peculiar reasons preventing me then from proceeding to Massowah*, I gave him, as his receipt shows, Lord Palmerston's despatch, begging him to forward it; but seven years afterwards it had not yet reached Gondar."

The foregoing statement is most ingeniously and *jesuitically* made, dates and intervening facts being omitted, which when added give to the affair a totally different appearance.

M. d'Abbadie, bearing the two despatches from the French and English Ministers to King Sahèla Döngöl, arrived at

* [Now better known as Monsieur Antoine d'Abbadie.]

Massowah in February 1840. He was there joined by his brother, whom he had left at Gondar, and the two together proceeded inland on the way to Gondar as far as Mai Tahalo in Semyen, at which place they were distant from the capital only about seventy-five miles in a direct line.

At Mai Tahalo, on May 21st, 1840, the brothers separated, Arnauld, the younger, continuing on to Gondar and taking with him the letter from Marshal Soult to the King; whilst the elder returned to the coast, *carrying back with him the letter he had received for that monarch from Lord Palmerston.*

In the beginning of July 1840 M. d'Abbadie left Massowah for Aden, where, some time during the following month of August (I know not the precise date, but I have the facts I am now about to relate in the handwriting of the late Captain Haines, I.N., who was then Political Agent at Aden), he was arrested by a native sentry on the heights of Djebel Shumshum, taking a plan of the fortifications. On being brought before Captain Haines, *M. d'Abbadie declared himself to be a Frenchman*; on which he was simply reprimanded and discharged. He did not at the time allude to the fact of his being the bearer of Lord Palmerston's despatch, neither had Captain Haines any idea of the fact.

From Aden M. d'Abbadie returned to Cairo, with the avowed intention of proceeding to Europe. But having altered his plans, he went back to Suez, which place he left for Aden on November 1st, on board the Honourable East India Company's steamer 'Berenice,' commanded by Captain Lowe, I.N.

Whilst M. d'Abbadie was at Suez, it was currently reported that he was a French spy; on hearing which Captain Lowe refused him a passage in his vessel. But on M. d'Abbadie's going on board *and producing Lord Palmerston's despatch and Mr. Backhouse's letter to himself enclosing the same*, Captain Lowe could not do otherwise than allow him to take his passage.

On November 10th, 1840, M. d'Abbadie arrived a second

time at Aden, whence he endeavoured to cross over to Tadjurrah with the intention of proceeding to Shoa; but, not finding the means of doing so, and Captain Haines having refused to assist him—though he made the same attempt with Lord Palmerston's letter which had so well succeeded with Captain Lowe,—he, on November 12th, delivered that letter over to Captain Haines, it being no longer of any use to him, and took that officer's receipt for the same, as has, subject to this explanation, been *truly* stated by him in the 'Athenæum.' Only M. d'Abbadie has not explained why Lord Palmerston's letter to the King of Abyssinia was not delivered over to his brother, together with that from Marshal Soult, when they parted at Mai Tahalo near Gondar, on May 21st, 1840.

Lord Palmerston's letter, after having (as would appear) been retained by Captain Haines for several months, was forwarded by him to the Reverend Louis Krapf, at Ankobar in Shoa, whom it reached on June 9th, 1841. I happened to be then in Shoa, and by Mr. Krapf's desire I wrote on the same day to the late Admiral (then Captain) Washington, requesting him to explain to Mr. Backhouse that Lord Palmerston's letter could not be sent on to Gondar just then, lest King Sáhela Selásye should be suspicious, Ras Ali being his great rival.

When I quitted Shoa for Godjam in October 1841, shortly after the arrival of the British mission under Major Harris, I certainly did not expect to see again this letter from Lord Palmerston to King Sahela Döngöl, which had already thrice crossed my path, at Suez, at Aden, and at Ankobar. But, to my astonishment, on February 10th, 1843, when I was at Yejubbi, in the south of Godjam, an Abyssinian messenger, whom I had sent to Shoa, returned with news of the approaching departure from that country of the British mission, and bringing me Lord Palmerston's letter, which Major Harris had sent to me to be forwarded to Ras Ali.

I was then within the territories of Dedjatj Biru, the hereditary prince of Godjam, who was a far greater enemy of Ras

Ali than King Sáhela Selásye was, the two princes being at that moment at open war; and the possession of a letter which, though addressed to the nominal Sovereign of Abyssinia, was in fact intended for Ras Ali, who governed in the King's name, might seriously have compromised me with Dedjatj Biru, who was of a very arbitrary and merciless character—especially as at that time M. Arnauld d'Abbadie had just arrived at his court with presents and was in high favour with him, and M. Antoine d'Abbadie himself was shortly expected: in fact, on my way home I met him, on March 11th, 1843, at Mahdera Mariam, one stage from Debra Tabor, Ras Ali's capital.

Independently of this, I was not under the orders of Major Harris, nor was I in any way an agent of the British Government; and therefore, as that officer had taken on himself to send me this letter for the King without my permission, and it was not in my power to return it to him in consequence of his having left Shoa, I felt myself quite at liberty to refuse to receive it from my messenger. •

The latter, fearing that he too might get into difficulty if he retained the letter, committed the unfortunate document to the flames, not (I admit) without my privity and entire approval; for I argued in my own mind that the delivery of such a letter after so many years, even supposing it to have been practicable, could hardly do any good, and might possibly be productive of much harm; whilst its possession by myself or any one connected with me, if detected, might have proved most calamitous.

In now making these facts known to your Lordship, I would take the liberty of adding that "Mr. Anthony Thomson D'Abbadie," to whom, as a British subject, Lord Palmerston's letter to "His Highness Sahela Döngöl, King of Abyssinia" was thus confided, has long since openly avowed himself to be "a Frenchman by education, fortune, and choice"*; and that,

[* See the 'Athenæum' of January 27th, 1849, No. 1109, p. 93; and February 17th, 1849, No. 1112, pp. 166, 167.]

in spite of his repeated disclaimer of all participation in the political and religious affairs of Abyssinia, he has in like manner declared in print within the last two years that by his means "deux missions chrétiennes étaient établies, l'une dans le nord, l'autre dans le sud de la haute Ethiopie;" so that there now remains no room to doubt the substantial correctness of the charge which was at the time openly brought against him by several well-informed persons, that he was a Jesuit emissary of the See of Rome and a secret agent of the French Government; and it is most important that Her Britannic Majesty's Government should bear in mind that one of the Roman Catholic missions, of the establishment of which he takes credit to himself, has long been the focus of French intrigue in Northern Abyssinia, and from the signs of the times appears likely to become ere long even more so than before.

I have, &c.

V.

Extracts from Letters from the REV. H. A. STERN and MR. ROSENTHAL, written during their imprisonment at Amba Magdala.

[Referred to in page 107, and repeatedly elsewhere.]

From Mr. Stern.

April 1865.

..... You are aware that in the beginning of April 1863 I reached Abyssinia. Our mission, though restricted in its operations, was then most prosperous, and despite obstacles I cherished the most hallowed anticipations respecting the future. In June, Captain Cameron, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, arrived a second time at our station at Djenda. The King, who had been at some distance, also quite accidentally came

into our neighbourhood. During his stay in our vicinity, I heard several times that he was annoyed that Captain Cameron had not brought an answer to his letter to the British Government, and also for having gone round the frontier and formed, as was falsely represented, 'prejudicial intimacies with his enemies, the Turks. Against us and our mission I also heard unfavourable reports; and as I knew the priests were opposed to us and our work, I communicated my fears to my fellow-labourers; and all agreed not to incur any expense except what was indispensably necessary for the support of schools, scripture-readers, and the extensive circulation of the Word of God. Not expecting violence or forcible detention even under the most adverse circumstances, I visited the Falashas of various districts; and at the end of August, accompanied by Cornelius, I set out for Armatjoho, a province well inhabited by Falashas, who had never seen a missionary or heard the tidings of redeeming love.

About the 20th of September I came back to Djenda, and on the evening of my return a royal order summoned the British Consul, all the missionary agents, and myself to Gondar, to hear the reading of the letter which M. Bardel had brought from the Emperor of the French. All obeyed the behest, and on the morning of the 2nd of October (I think the dates may not be quite correct) the despatch was publicly read, and the fictitious interview between M. Bardel and Napoleon III. narrated before the small European colony. The King was exceedingly dissatisfied with the letter and the reception of his messenger, and I know that M. Lejean, the French Consul, might still have kept us company, had not Abúna Salama arrested the King's violence, and gained him permission to leave. M. Lejean and M. Legard, a French physician, were peremptorily required to quit Abyssinia, and the rest returned to their respective homes.

The crisis, which for some time had been looming in the distance, was now drawing nearer and nearer. All felt that

there was something impending; but even the most timid dreaded nothing beyond the seizure of property and expulsion from the country. My own work being finished, I purchased the requisite number of animals, and started for the coast. On my way I had to repass Gondar, where the King was still with his army. The Metropolitan with wonted kindness invited me to his residence, an offer which I gratefully accepted. I reached Gondar on Thursday, and on Saturday I intended to pay my salaam to His Majesty. Unfortunately, before I could secure a *baldarabā* or introducer, the King unexpectedly set out on an expedition against a rebel. I remained at Gondar till Tuesday, and then bade a final adieu to the Bishop and other friends, and quitted, as I thought for ever, the capital of Abyssinia. Captain Cameron, and also the Frenchman Bardel, accompanied me about two hours on my road, and then shook hands and parted.

My people as well as myself were in the happiest mood, a feeling which even our animals seemed to share, for they marched with ease along the shelving path and even dizzying precipices up to the plain of Wóggera. Here, to my surprise, I saw the King's white tent glittering in the sun's rays on one of the heights which dot the plateau. Duty as well as courtesy forbade me to advance without saluting His Majesty. This induced me to halt; and towards afternoon I proceeded, accompanied by two servants, of whom one spoke a little Arabic, to the royal camping-ground.

After waiting about two hours, His Majesty came into the open air. Myself and attendants immediately made a most humble obeisance. There was a frown on the King's countenance, which augured nothing auspicious. Between the first question and the death of my two servants, the hand of time could not have advanced ten minutes. The gloom of approaching night, the rattling of the sticks, and my own doubtful fate prompted me to put my hand mechanically to my lips, or, as it was said, to put a finger into my mouth.

This was construed into a crime, and in less time than these words take to pen, I was stript, beaten, and lay almost lifeless on the ground. Wounded, bruised, and bleeding, my executioners dragged or rather carried me down the hill, where my swollen wrist was fasten by a hoop and chain to the arm of a soldier. My guardian, moved with compassion, tried with rank grass to stanch the blood which profusely welled out of more than a score of gashes and scars; but, finding the effort useless, he wrapt himself in his *shama*, and, with my spectral form clinging to him, fell asleep. I also sank several times into a feverish stupor; and, oh! how gladly would I have passed the wearisome hours of night in forgetfulness, had not the shifting motion of blood in my mouth and throat denied me this indulgence. In sighs, groans, and excruciating agonies the night waned, and the beautiful stars, unconscious of mortal woes, glittered with wonted brightness in the eastern horizon.

At daylight I was given into the charge of several chiefs, whilst the King moved on to Gondar. The villagers, as also my guards, showed me much sympathy, and like the good Samaritan they washed my wounds, and brought me an abundance of milk, the only nourishment my inflamed lips and gums allowed me to swallow down. Midday, my servants strongly guarded were conducted to my temporary prison; and never shall I forget the shrieks, lamentations, and agonizing contortions which the sight of their afflicted master occasioned. Orders had been sent that I should have foot and hand-fetters; but as my ankles were too much inflamed for the hoops, they transgressed the royal command, and only tied my left hand to my right ankle.

The next day a detachment of troops came to escort me and my servants to Gondar. I was now treated as a regular criminal: in fact, my position became so painful and my physical suffering so intense, that I looked for death as a happy release. The abject condition to which I had been

reduced softened even the flinty hearts of my guards, and, amidst words of comfort and hope, they told me in whispering breath that my intimacy with the Bishop, and the report that he had sold the church lands to me and the British Consul, were the cause of my misfortune, and that it might have fared worse with me had I passed the royal camp, as arrangements had already been made for my arrest. Loss of blood and want of food, beyond a few biscuits, brought on a melancholy and a depression of spirits which language cannot depict.

On the fourth day (I believe) Mr. Flad, M. Bardel, Samuel (a convert of Bishop Gobat*), and two officers of the royal household came to inspect my luggage, as I was suspected of having letters from the Bishop or Captain Cameron. My photographic sketches and a well-assorted collection of insects, however, entirely absorbed their curiosity, and the search turned out to be only a farce.

In going away, I mentioned to M. Bardel that I had papers and diaries which might compromise me, to which he readily replied, "Don't be afraid; for, if anything is found, I will say they are the journals of a gentleman in England." My visitors gave me and my luggage again in charge to the guards, and then left. A few days later all the missionary agents arrived at Gondar, and at the royal behest visited me. They all thought, as I subsequently learnt, that my days were numbered, and that I could not possibly survive my horrid wounds. Mr. Flad, who remained at Gondar, obtained leave to give me medicine; and his occasional hope-inspiring visits, and a regular supply of wholesome provisions from the house of the Consul, staved off the fever, contrary to the expectation of my friends, and brought on a better state of health. The anticipated arrival of favourable letters from the British Government, as well as the energetic efforts of the Metro-

[* Samuel was converted (that is to say, baptized) by Mr. Isenberg, Bishop Gobat's successor, as is related in note † to page 79.—C. B.]

politan and other friends, dispelled every doubt of my speedy release. Captain Cameron, Her Majesty's Consul, also kindly offered to exert himself officially in my behalf; but I disclaimed all assistance that was not strictly of a conciliatory and friendly character.

About the beginning of November, the King wrote to his European workmen at Gaffat, that he had tortured me long enough, and that if they approved of it they should come to Gondar and reconcile us. My prospects now looked bright and hopeful, when, unexpectedly, His Majesty was informed (I know by whom, but will not without positive proof give the name) that I had papers unfavourable to him. This was exactly four weeks after my beating and incarceration. Not dreaming of anything inauspicious, and animated by the sweet hope of liberty, I passed the greater part of the day in conversation with my guards, when unexpectedly Samuel and a party of soldiers came rushing into my prison, seized every article in it, and carried it off to the King. My Egyptian servant, Joseph, who had been my fellow-prisoner though not in chains, was desired to follow. Two hours of torturing suspense had elapsed, when bags, boxes, &c. were again brought back, *minus* every paper and book. I anxiously interrogated poor Joseph about every incident; but he was so agitated and nervous that I could only gather from his incoherent sentences that every paper and book had been handed to M. Bardel, who acted as examiner, and that now and then the King said *Cocab* (my name in Amharic*) is a *bilhatenya* (clever man); then again, a *tonkulenya* (cunning man).

The glowing prospect of freedom and restoration to the bosom of my family, from that hour, like the declining rays of sun, sank before my mind's vision, and all again became dark. Cheerless and dismal and removed from all human aid, I

[* In Amharic and Arabic *Cocab* means "star," as *Stern* does in German.—C. B.]

threw myself then, as during all my subsequent sufferings, on the arm of Omnipotence, and fearlessly braved the crested waves that threatened to engulf me.

In the evening I was given in charge of severer guards, and tied hands and feet. Joseph, who was tenderly attached to me, unable to check his deep emotion, groaned and sighed as if his heart would burst. Twenty-five soldiers and five chiefs were now appointed as my regular guard ; but, notwithstanding this formidable watch, some during the night actually put their legs across my stiffened limbs, to prevent what they must have thought a miraculous escape. No stranger was allowed to approach my tent. A servant of the chief of the soldiers now and then baked me a few flat cakes, and brought me a leather bottle of water. One of the guards, into whose good graces I had wormed myself, informed me that I had an enemy at Gondar, and, snapping his fingers (a sign that all was over), ejaculated " We are all dust, and must die."

On Tuesday evening, as stated, I was bound with fetters on hands and feet, and on the Monday following, I heard from a delegate of the King that all the missionary agents had been brought in chains to the camp. Subsequently I was informed that they had all been again released, then that one was still in irons ; and finally, to add to the confusion, M. Makerer, a French servant of the British Consul, sent me word through a soldier that the longed-for letter from the British Government would arrive in two days, and that on Friday I was to be liberated. Seconds yielded to minutes, minutes to hours, and at last came Friday. I had already lost trust in messages ; but early on that morning, to my agreeable surprise and gratitude, the feet-chains were opened. Less guarded than usual, I sat in my tented prison, and prayerfully ruminated on my future destiny. About midday my fierce chief jailer marched into the tent, and commanded that I should accompany him to His Majesty.

I immediately obeyed the summons ; but, instead of a pri-

vate interview with the monarch, I found the whole army drawn up in a square, the furthest line of which was occupied by a kind of throne, on which sat the King, shaded by gigantic silken umbrellas. On the left side of His Majesty I noticed Messrs. Bardel and Zander, and on the right a host of priests and scribes; whilst in the interior of the square and squatted on carpets were ranged in opposite lines the King's European workmen, Her Britannic Majesty's Consul, and the missionaries. The grins of some and the dejection of others filled me with a mingled feeling of contempt and gratitude. Scarcely one of the Europeans ventured to gaze at me, whilst myriads of black glittering eyes vainly tried to pierce my inmost soul.

Fearless and confident in the purity and integrity of my actions, I calmly awaited the issue of that pompous court of justice. My Christian fortitude (and I do not say it in a boastful strain), which always rose higher as the danger became more imminent, almost flagged, as on looking round I saw Rosenthal in chains standing about a hundred steps from me. Ignorant of the crimes he had committed, I forgot entirely my own misery, and allowed an excited fancy to torment itself in reflecting on the sorrow, grief, and pain I had brought upon others. The distress, agony, and horror of his desolate young wife rose like a revolting phantom before my mental vision, and unconsciously made me shake the abominable fetters by which I was held. A violent pull from the jailer put a stop to the dreamy speculation.

The *Fetha Negest* was then read; and according to that code the verdict of death was pronounced on all who spoke, wrote, or offended the King. Judgment being thus announced before the accusations were read, the prisoners were naturally deprived of all defence or hope. For form's sake the charges were however read. Ten articles were, I believe, brought forward against me; and the most formidable of these were, the assertion that a war between the King and a foreign power

would remove intolerance and introduce religious liberty—that since the death of Mr. Bell the King had no good counsellor—that various provinces and also Djenda had been plundered—and, lastly, that in passing a place where lay bleaching in the sun 700 or 800 skulls, I had stated in my diary they had been murdered in cold blood. The only offensive statement in my book, of which I had unfortunately one copy, was the pedigree of His Majesty; and the last heavy crime consisted in my having a few harmless and complimentary notes from the Metropolitan.

Rosenthal's sins, which were laid upon me though I knew not a word of what he had written till that very moment, consisted in some remarks about the King's private life, in a letter to a relative in London. Even Mrs. Flad was arraigned before this Imperial court, and that, forsooth, because she wrote to me a note a year before, in which she stated that the Abyssinian lion had degenerated into a tiger, which note I carelessly threw among other papers. She was immediately pardoned on account of her husband; but myself and Mr. Rosenthal, notwithstanding all I urged against the malice and obvious perversions in the translations, were unanimously declared guilty. Knowing full well from sad experience what the verdict implied, I appealed to Samuel and entreated him to solicit the royal pardon in our behalf. At first he did not deign to give me a reply; but on reiterating the request, he angrily retorted "to-morrow, to-morrow."

The King now waved his hand, and both Mr. Rosenthal and myself were led off to our common tented prison. The chains were the same day again fastened round our legs, and faith had once more to exert its energy and seek refuge from surrounding despair in the arms of Omnipotence. Judgment was given on Friday, and on Monday morning all my luggage was for the last time carried off to the King. The same evening Sháka*

[* *Shaka* or *Shálaka* is a contraction of *ya shih álaka*, the chief of a thousand, or chiliarch. Like most Abyssinian titles, it is often merely

Ubye, our fiendish jailer, tumbled half drunk into our tent, and after eyeing me awhile like a basilisk exclaimed, "If I had a sword, I would cut off that dog's head;" and then, making again a pause, he jumped up, dragged me along the ground by the chain, and amidst a shower of the vilest epithets, began to hammer tight my fetters. Rosenthal having on slave-irons, he could not augment his torture, and so he dismissed him with the remark, "He is a *bála-mákerah*" i. e. a sufferer on account of the other. These harassing scenes wrung the heart, and made death to be courted more than life.

On the next morning Samuel and an officer came to our prison, and in the name of His Majesty promised me a pardon and favours, if I confessed that through the family of the wife of Ras Ubye, one of the greatest men in the country, I had obtained the information respecting the royal descent. I deprecated all acquaintance, direct or indirect, with that family; and my tormentors walked off in a discontented and angry humour. A spasmodic calm, like the lull of the elements before the outburst of a storm, now crept into our tent. We attributed this to the arrival of the impatiently expected letter from the British Government, an intelligence that came to us quite accidentally. Every day, though in misery of a life-long duration, must perform its diurnal motion, and add its segment to the past. This we mournfully experienced in our captivity, where even minutes became long periods in one's sad existence.

The memorable 4th of December at length broke, with wonted brightness, upon the afflicted and happy, the prisoner and the free. About noon that day our fetters on the feet were removed, and, escorted by a detachment of soldiers, we were conducted before the King. His Majesty was at our arrival engaged in administering justice, and for two hours we had to stand close to the criminals who were undergoing the dreadful punishment of the *djirāf**.

honorary. I have taken on myself to alter the spelling of this and several other words as written by Mr. Stern.—C. B.]

* A whip made of hippopotamus hide, about 5 feet long.

On being summoned nearer, His Majesty ironically said, in reference to an expression which had inadvertently dropped from my lips, "Are you now afraid?" We gave no reply, but quietly resigned ourselves to Him who is a help to His servants in all times of need. His Majesty then peremptorily inquired why we had insulted him? Fearlessly, though respectfully, I returned, "Our object has not been to insult your Majesty, nor have we written a single word in the language of this country; but if we have done wrong we humbly crave your royal pardon." Samuel, who acted as interpreter, had not quite finished translating this sentence, when the King commanded to take away our shammas and shirts. Miserable, wretched, with a mere rag around the waist, we were conducted back to our prison.

Our guards now consulted among themselves whether they should leave us in the open air, or permit us again to occupy the tent. The fear of our escape induced them to consign us again to our old place, where on the bare ground we spent a never-to-be-forgotten twelve hours. Cold and chilly was the night; gloomy and sad appeared the dawn of day. Our chief jailer, who had gone to the King, came back in about two hours; but instead of leading us to execution, as we had every reason to believe, he brought to each a tattered rag, and also ordered us to have some bread and water.

Respite and not release did not lighten our burden or mitigate our mental and physical sufferings. A young native lad in the service of Mr. Flad, accompanied by a friendly soldier, occasionally came to the door of our tent, and by signs gave us to understand that we were ere long to be liberated. Our guards also put a stop to their petty tyrannies, and some became even civil and communicative. We now heard from all sides that our lives had been in imminent peril; nay, we were assured that on the day the King had us stripped, the knives to cut off our hands and feet were actually lying close to the spot where we stood, and that the fell deed was only prevented

by the energetic remonstrances and intercession of the head of the monks. Thus, almost miraculously delivered from mutilation and a horrible death, we shook off the depressing melancholy which had deprived us almost of our senses, and began afresh to foster the prayerful hope of freedom and liberty.

Fifteen days more of trouble and exhausting anxiety rolled away. I do not recollect the date, but it was on a rainy and dull morning, that our tent-door was lifted up, and, to our surprise as well as joy, there entered Flad, Samuel, and several of the Bishop's and King's people. My body being almost bent double by the chains, Flad softly requested me not to rise, as is customary at the receipt of a royal message, but simply told me that His Majesty wished me to give him the exact price of certain silks which had been presented to him by the Metropolitan*.

Having finished the valuation, which I could easily do, as most had been purchased by me in England, Samuel ordered me to get up, and he then informed me that it had been the King's design to kill me, but that God had not permitted it, and that now *I had the means of regaining the royal favour, if I supplied Mr. Flad, who was going to Europe, with letters to procure machines and one or two gunpowder-makers.* On the return of Mr. Flad, His Majesty would also allow me to leave Abyssinia, and that, too, overloaded with presents and a name famous in Africa and Europe. During the interval His Majesty would set me free and afford me occupation in taking for him photographic sketches. I felt inclined to object to all these proposals; but Flad, to whom the King himself had shown the spot where he intended to kill me, advised me to give an unqualified assent to every demand, or otherwise it might go badly with myself and also with Mr. Rosenthal.

His Majesty sent the following day to open our hand-chains,

* The Bishop presented to the King on his own account articles of considerable value, hoping thereby to gain his favour and promote my restoration to freedom.

but, on Mr. Flad's representation that my legs were in a bad state, the order was reversed. Samuel subsequently said that the King wanted that the same fetters should that very day be attached to the Consul and Makerer, and that he had to beg most earnestly to prevent the command from being carried into effect. Our affairs, though still undecided, assumed a more favourable aspect. We were again allowed to have a servant and also clothing, which (you will smile) consisted of shifts from Mrs. Rosenthal's and Mrs. Flad's rifled wardrobes. What we most prized were two Bibles, a solace we had not enjoyed for six long and trying weeks. Poor Joseph, whose constitution fright, terror, and suffering had entirely sapped, was removed to Gondar, where, after a week's illness, he breathed his last.

Two or three days after the above incidents, Mr. Flad and Samuel came again to me and requested me to write to my friends to ensure the success of Mr. Flad's mission. Mechanically I complied with the royal behest, and then made some oral arrangement with Flad on the subject. Another year of exile appeared inevitable. The King himself communicated his agreement with me to the Europeans at Gaffat. Judging rightly of my feelings, they gently remonstrated with the King against my further detention, and, instead of a machine and powder-makers through me, they promised to provide them selves all that His Majesty required. Their objection appeared plausible to the King, *and they were requested to come to the camp at Gondar to reconcile us*, when Captain Cameron, uninformed of all this, sent in a letter demanding leave to depart for his post at Massowah, in compliance with orders from the British Government. This once more proved fatal to my own and Rosenthal's prospects; and on January 3rd, 1864, Captain Cameron, his European servants, and all the missionaries were put in fetters, and we, together with them, confined to one common prison within the royal enclosure.....

July 13, 1865.

..... We anticipated that Mr. Rassam, Her Majesty's agent at Massowah, would, by his friendly and conciliatory letters to the King, ere this have appeased his offended pride and obtained our release from these galling chains. Our anticipations have however to our grief not been realized; and we must still for some time be patient and prayerful expectants of coming deliverance. His Majesty about ten days ago wrote to Mr. Rassam to come to Abyssinia; and his advent and the delivery of the Queen's letter, we believe, may possibly effect our liberation.

Just now everything here is in a transition state; and it is quite impossible to prognosticate the events of the ensuing few months or even weeks. A general undisguised presentiment of a change is evinced in the open revolt of all the important provinces; and relentless despotism may soon experience a terrible retribution. My own and most of my fellow-prisoner's misfortunes may, to a great extent, be attributed to the crafty insinuations and insidious malice of godless, unprincipled men, who in the ruin of others sought to attain their own nefarious and selfish ends. I do not, however, despair or despond.

To-day I have been in chains twenty-one months; and although during that long heart-wasting existence I have had to submit to fiendish tortures, and more than once have been obliged to face (apparently) a cruel death, yet I enjoy an infinite satisfaction in the consciousness that by an inflexible Christian firmness I saved others and won influential friends to the cause of Missions in Abyssinia. His Majesty, since our arrival here, has not favoured us even with an *en passant* inquiry. Placed on a level with murderers, robbers, and other great criminals, our days have rolled on in the usual sad monotony of savage prison life.

Within the last few days we have, however, again experienced something of His Majesty's feelings against the white

prisoners. The cause of this fresh outburst of indignation is utterly unconnected with our affairs. On the night of the 1st inst., Menilek, the Crown-Prince of Shoa, and son-in-law to the Negus Theodore, unexpectedly quitted the royal camp, and, accompanied by his followers (but not by his young wife), fled to his own country. The King, irritated at the desertion of another powerful prop of his throne, next morning executed all the Galla prisoners, then quarrelled with the Bishop, and at last his chafed spirit vented itself on all his Christian prisoners, by giving them, besides foot-, hand-chains also. This art of tormenting (which is ascribed to the wise King of Israel) is a most cruel invention, particularly when, as in our case, the fetters are so short, that one is actually bent double and unable to move about by day or to stretch our weary limbs by night. There is a report that we are to be released from these abominable hand-shackles. I shall be thankful if it proves to be true, as the stooping attitude affects my head and causes great pain in the spine.

August 9, 1865.

. . . . On Sunday morning, January 3, 1864, some of our guards with bated breath informed us that the *Negus* was sending and receiving messages from the *Frendjotj* (the Consul and the Missionaries), and that probably we should be liberated. Tossed about on a sea of trouble and care, any intelligence of this kind, even from the lips of an Abyssinian, did not fail to excite our depressed spirits to renewed courage and confidence. About midday our truculent jailer strode in breathless hurry into our tent, and, after convincing himself that all was right, ordered in the name of His Majesty a detachment of troops to execute an important behest. I did not understand the commission; but the promptitude with which all sallied forth convinced me that they were charged to arrest a prisoner or to seize some property*.

* Subsequently we heard that they had been dispatched to Gondar to arrest the Consul's people and to seize the property in his own

Later our redoubtable Sháka Ubye once more made his appearance, and in an imperative tone commanded us to accompany him to the King. On leaving the tent Rosenthal said to me, "What do you think this summons signifies?" "On a Sunday," I returned, "we need not to apprehend anything inauspicious." A group of curious idlers followed us within the fence that divided the royal camp from that of the troops. A second palisaded enclosure on a small eminence, occupied by white and black tents, revealed the abode of His Majesty and the royal household. We thought that we were to be conducted up to that busy acclivity where a few weeks before we had such a doleful interview; but instead of this our guards escorted us to a white tent on the left that ominously fronted an elevated bank, on which two 4-pounders, mounted on rickety ship-carriages, ostentatiously displayed their unpolished brazen fronts. A profusion of ragged carpets covered the entire space between these pieces of ordnance and the pavilion,—a parade of regal pomp quite unusual except on grand gala days.

Our excited imagination immediately ran riot with all sorts of pleasing conjectures, which even now, after the lapse of so many trying months, I recall with satisfaction, as they afforded me a passing relief from perpetual trouble and care. The happy illusion in which I indulged was dispelled on a nearer approach. His Abyssinian Majesty had for some months felt disposed to quarrel, or, as he emphatically styled it, to humble the pride of the Europeans (probably England and France); but his rigorous severity towards the two white prisoners, and the still lingering expectation of a favourable reply to his letter to the British Government, imposed a temporary restraint on his towering pride. The delay, or I believe the certainty of no answer, and the request of the Consul to

house, as well as everything in the temporary home of Mrs. Rosenthal and Mrs. Flad.

start for his post, together with the crafty insinuations of ill-disposed individuals, produced their baneful effect, and Captain Cameron, the missionaries, and every other European not in the actual service of His Majesty, were insultingly arrested.

Ignorant of all that had occurred, and seeing my friends sad and desponding, diffidently, as if I dreaded the inquiry, I said, "What is the meaning of all this?" Mr. Flad with a forced calmness responded, "We are all prisoners, and about to be chained." The manacles were indeed soon brought, and under the auspices of Basha Olash (now in chains at Magdala) hammered around the wrists of the culprits. The custom of attaching a soldier to each prisoner was in the present instance not strictly followed; two white men to one black was deemed sufficient security, and myself and Rosenthal, who were considered harmless criminals, the chief commanded to be merely shackled to each other.

As the hour of evening drew nigh, a strong guard took their station in and around the tent, and, as if suspicious of the white man's skill in opening chains and making use of potent spells to burst impassable barricades, they watched our slightest movements with a nervous trepidation. The dark shades of night had already enveloped in their murky mantle every object, when Samuel entered our prison, and in the blandest accents, which were contradicted by the smiles of satisfaction that lit up his sharp features, inquired whether Captain Cameron had his bed and wonted comforts. He also benignantly favoured me with an oblique glance, and *en passant* remarked, "I hope you are happier now in the company of friends than in your former isolated position." He relieved us of some of the guards who most inconveniently thronged the tent, and then bidding us an *Egziabhér yafatátjhu*, "may God deliver you," slunk quietly away.

The next day the servants of our fellow-prisoners, who at the first alarm had sought the bush, on obtaining better tidings

came again straggling into Gondar, from whence some found their way to their incarcerated masters. The retributions already inflicted for an imaginary insult, one might have thought would have satisfied even a more sensitive monarch than the "successor of Solomon;" but chains alone were not deemed sufficient, and the few defenceless strangers must be despoiled of the property in their possession. In this glorious enterprise, so congenial to the taste of the royal marauders, the most heartless conduct was exhibited. In the vacated tents of the Consul and the missionaries in the camp, where they had been for some weeks unchained prisoners, they seized every article that was either of value or use; but their prowess could not achieve similar exploits unopposed in Mrs. Flad's and Mrs. Rosenthal's dwelling at Gondar.

These ladies, roused to a pitch of frenzy, defied heroically the cowardly attempts of the ruffians to rob them and their helpless babes of their necessary food and clothing. Mrs. Flad particularly distinguished herself in the encounter with the undisciplined savages. "Go tell your King," she said, energetically, to the leader of the band, "that we are weak oppressed women, yet, if he wishes to kill us, we together with our infants shall deem it a mercy to be despatched at once, rather than be subject to a slow and lingering torture." This message was delivered *verbatim* to His Majesty, and he swallowed the smarting rebuke by merely observing, "These white women compared to ours are perfect devils."

Even Mrs. Rosenthal with her limited knowledge of the language boldly faced some of the depredators. One brave, who had forcibly wrested from her a few pieces of sugar, she pursued courageously through the camp-ground, and would not give up the chase till the fellow restored the stolen article. Another black, amidst rude ribaldry wanted to test the comforts of an iron folding chair. Mrs. Rosenthal immediately hastened to close it; but Mrs. Flad had already laid hold on the leg, and the coarse savage, before he had tasted the luxury of a

civilized seat, to the amusement of his companions tumbled heavily on the stony ground. Poor little Anne, Flad's eldest girl, about four years old, had her temper also ruffled during the pillage. Her rag doll which she had carefully concealed in a particular nook, was accidentally discovered and confiscated by the robbers. With tears and "by the King's death," she protested against this illegal seizure; but the ruthless heroes were deaf to her entreaties, and for more than half an hour capered madly around it ere they yielded it up to the sobbing child.

While such and similar scenes were being enacted at Gondar, a crossfire of questions and answers was lustily kept up between His Majesty and the *Frendjotj*. The vexatious topic of the unfortunate letter and certain personal favours* formed the staple of the queries put to Her Majesty's Consul. From the tenor of the questions one could perceive that His Majesty began to be conscious that in his conduct towards all he had exceeded the bounds of a ruler and a professing Christian; but, stimulated by burning revenge, he stifled every better and more generous sentiment, and haughtily informed Captain Cameron that he knew Her Britannic Majesty would send some great man to inquire into his proceeding towards her representative and the other *Frendjotj*; but then as now his answer would be, "I can do in my country what I please."

Captain Cameron's business being dismissed, Samuel, the royal delegate, turned his vulture eyes upon me, and demanded to know what I meant by the statements contained in my papers, that "if the Negús provoked the hostility of the French or the aggression of the Turks, the conflict would probably break the enthralling bonds of intolerance and confer the boon of religious liberty on Abyssinia." "His Majesty," I responded, "is already acquainted with the views of the Emperor Napoleon

* I made it a rule with myself and fellow-labourers not to accept any presents from the King, beyond a cow or a few sheep; and now he could not reproach me with his unappreciated favours and gifts.

on this subject, as they were embodied in the letter conveyed to the King through M. Bardel; and it would consequently be a superfluous task for me to give a comment on language that was plain enough." "And what will England do if such a contingency should arise?" rejoined my interlocutor. "The British Government," I returned, "has always cherished the most friendly feelings towards Abyssinia, and it might be, if they thought that religious toleration would enhance the moral and material welfare of the country, that they would support, without insisting on such a concession."

Samuel carried these answers back to the King, and then returned again, and in a stern tone said, "the Negús has heard your replies, and did he deem it expedient he could tell you a secret about England; but what does it matter? time will reveal it." I was anxious to discover the meaning of this mystery, which evidently was some mischievous intelligence communicated by the lying tongue of an unprincipled royal parasite. Samuel saw the drift, and, as he had perhaps ample reason to evade an explanation, he promptly slid the interrogations into a new groove, and in the name of His Majesty proudly insisted that I should mention the name or names of the parties who had furnished me the particulars about the royal ancestry. Here a war of words ensued. Samuel dexterously tried to extort the names, and I adroitly eluded his request. Baffled and thwarted, the indignant courtier arrogantly demanded that I should tell him the title I had bestowed in my book* on the parent of the Negús. Too much candour here betrayed me into a serious mistake; for instead of saying that I had stated His Majesty's father was the Duke [Dedjazmatj] of Kwára, I lowered him to the grade of a mere *baláta*, "nobleman," a dignity arrogated by many a despised peasant.

This day of intense misery tardily at length drew to a close, and, freed from our tormentor, each one according to his incli-

* 'Wanderings among the Falashas.'

nation was once more allowed to chew the bitter cud of his own ill-boding imagination. In the evening our tyrannical jailer Sháka Ubye, on resuming his night-watch, brought the Amharic New Testament, and pointing to the last verse of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, which stands on the top of the page, commanded me and Rosenthal to give the Negús an explanation of the passage the next day. The awful import of the text, and the frightful verdict it denounces on guilty, polluted sinners, made me first doubt whether I was among sane or mad savages; but when I recollected the dire emphasis Samuel had laid on the words, which, in the course of the interrogations, had escaped my lips, "If it pleases God to bring me back to England, I shall know how to correct the pedigree of His Majesty," all misgivings vanished, and I anticipated without dread or terror my approaching doom. For weeks and weeks I had indeed been weary of this lingering torture and incessant misery; and now when the ominous warning came, the knell of parting life was to me merely an emancipation from the cruel and bitter tyranny of earth, to the glory, peace, and rest of heaven. Our heartless jailer who, I believe, never felt any other emotion in his petrified bosom than that caused by the love of rapine and plunder, on hearing from Mr. Flad the contents of the verse, compassionately remarked, "They are not bad men, but this is a bad business."

Gradually the night rolled away, and daylight with its cheering sun and bustling hum broke upon the sad and lonely prisoners*. There was no conversation, and no interchange of thought; every one had sorrow engraven on his brow, and gloomy misgivings concealed in his heart. Anticipating every moment the fatal summons, faith, invigorated by Divine grace,

* Subsequently Captain Cameron, Flad, and Cornelius told me that during those anxious hours they had frequently cast secret glances on the vacant paddock near our tent, to see if the gallows on which the victims of tyranny were to suffer, was in the course of erection.

triumphed over the throes of impending death, and, without one of those ever shifting fluctuations of hope and fear which under such circumstances naturally agitate the human breast, I watched calmly and composedly the flying hours of time. Midday passed—the afternoon declined—evening approached, and still no royal messenger made his appearance. Another night of earthly cares slowly waned away, and a new day of troubles stole quietly in upon us.

At length, about noon, Samuel, that messenger of evil, appeared in our prison. After a condescending salutation, which even in the moment of the basest intrigue he never omitted, Mr. Rosenthal and myself were required to rise, and in the best Arabic of his rejected Koran, he ordered me, at the behest of his royal master, to expound the pointed-out passage of Sacred Writ. Instantly I seized the New Testament, and commenting on the whole chapter, told Samuel that the terrible indictment of the Apostle against an unbelieving world had not the remotest connexion with the offences charged upon us; but if His Majesty thought the reverse, we both deplored to have incurred his displeasure, and craved his clemency. Samuel now read the chapter himself, and as he came to the revolting catalogue of crimes alleged against the fallen posterity of Adam, he unwillingly vented his astonishment at the unhappy selection in the ejaculation, “Djanhoi! Djanhoi!” “Oh, King! Oh, King!” . . .

His Majesty himself, rather ashamed of his quotation, or satisfied that he had inflicted sufficient sufferings, on the return of the messenger informed us that the unlettered Sháka Ubye had stupidly stuck his digits on the last verse of the 1st chapter, instead of the beginning of the 2nd. The reproof he now designed to administer was obvious, and therefore, without expatiating on the propounded passage, I sought to mollify the hard heart of our oppressor, by soliciting Samuel to inform him that both Rosenthal and myself lamented to have involuntarily offended him, and in imitation of the com-

passionate Saviour to repentant sinners, recorded in the 1st Epistle of St. John, chapter 1, verses 8 and 9, we implored him to accept our apology and suffering as an atonement for our transgression.

Samuel soon returned with the message that His Majesty had read the passage, and *as he hoped to obtain forgiveness of his sins he also extended pardon and entire oblivion for the past to us*; and henceforth, added the servile courtier, you will pray for the Negús, as the Negús charges me to tell you he will pray for you. The shadows of death in which we had been enshrouded for twice twenty-four hours were now dispelled, and, relieved from the spectral vision of a cruel torturing martyrdom, we once more speculated on liberty and freedom. Pardoned—but in chains; restored to royal favour—but in prison, may appear puzzling paradoxes; but it must be recollected that His Majesty was then in the swing of glory, and, impelled by untamed passion, he resented the imaginary slight of the British Government on the few defenceless strangers in his power.

On the same day that the Negús manifested a faint inclination to generosity and mercy, the rest of the white prisoners, consisting of Mrs. Flad, Mrs. Rosenthal, Joseph and Schiller, two German ornithologists, Kerans, M^cKilvie, and Makerer, two English and one Frenchman, in the service of the Consul, were conducted from Gondar down into the camp. The two ladies, who were not treated like regular prisoners, were taken by Samuel to that part of the camp occupied by his establishment; and the rest, after receiving their chains, were located in a tent opposite to our own.

Moved by caprice, or perhaps satisfied revenge, the King ordered a few of the most worthless articles among the pillage to be restored to the prisoners. Here an incident occurred which strikingly illustrated the guardian care of our Heavenly Father, and inspired the depressed soul with unwavering faith and trust.

About the middle of November 1863, Mr. Kerans had arrived at Gondar, with a packet for the Consul. Amongst the letters there were several for me; but as I was a closely guarded malefactor and unapproachable, Mrs. Rosenthal took charge of them. On the day that her property was a second time entirely confiscated, these longed-for epistles from distant friends were safely concealed in a secret drawer in her work-box. Anxious to destroy everything that might compromise me afresh, she tried hard to abstract them, but the keen eye of the guard rendered the attempt abortive. In the evening, to her delight, the box was restored, and though forced open, the clumsy depredators had not discovered the hidden recess. Mrs. Rosenthal immediately communicated to me this fortunate recovery, and at my request she and Mrs. Flad perused the letters ere they were consigned to the flames. I was afterwards informed that they were harmless except one, which contained some questions about the Negús, that might again have roused his dark and ever wakeful suspicion, and involved me in new grave troubles.

Settled down into regular prison habits, our days were wiled away in listless inactivity or anxious care. Now and then our evenings were varied by a quarrel with the guards, who, reckless about space, thronged in groups into our tents, and impregnated the already stifling atmosphere with the putrescent odours of their fœtid garments and buttered heads. The Negús, too, occasionally relieved the dulness of our existence by a message to the Consul, or the gift of a cow or a few sheep to replenish our exhausted larder. Sometimes also he sent and requested to know the meaning of a pirated sketch of the "Illustrated London News"—sometimes of a Bible picture—sometimes of an illuminated advertisement torn out of an unfortunate Monthly; *but most of all was the inquisitive descendant of Solomon interested by the caricatures of "Punch,"* which lay scattered among the plundered archives of the British Consulate.

These friendly communications rendered the dreaded presence of Samuel quite amusing, and his visits, which were neither few nor far between, were then always diverting and agreeable. One day he walked into our tent scowling like a fiend, and handed to the Consul a large full-written sheet of paper. As I was standing close to him, I cast a glance on the formidable document, and without betraying my emotions perceived that it was an energetic protest of M. Lejean, the French Consul, against the treatment he had received from King Théodoros. Captain Cameron, after glancing over it, exclaimed, "Samuel! Samuel! this is a sad business!" but the stern delegate, without attending to his words, urged him to read it. Having complied with the request he handed it to me, and commanded that I should give him the contents of it in Arabic. Uncharitable as it may seem, I confess it afforded me some satisfaction to obey the order; and heedless about the wrinkles which each fresh sentence wreathed on his frowning brow, I translated every word, not omitting even the brutal conduct of His Majesty in chaining the representative of a potent foreign Sovereign in full uniform. The outraged envoy restrained his boiling passion till I had concluded, and then he gave vent to his impotent rage in the ridiculous epithets, "dog, liar, donkey, why did you not say all this when you were in the King's country."

The precious document, which unsparingly exposed the vanity, weakness, and barbarism of the monarch, must in perusing it have rankled like a barbed arrow in his ambitious breast. In the absence of any other white men on whom to retaliate, we expected that our treatment would be more ruthless and severe; but whether guided by gentler emotions, or actuated by a disguised presentiment that the day of retribution was approaching, matters continued *in statu quo*, and "Punch," the "Illustrated London News," advertisements of razors and chandelier manufacturers, continued to pour into our tented prison.

About the end of January reports were afloat that M. Bardel, who had gone on the service of the Negús to Kasala, the capital of Soudan, to spy what the Egyptians intended to do, was on his way back, and that on his arrival the European workmen at Gaffat would also come to the camp, whither they had been summoned to attend a special Council. The rumour proved true; for on the 3rd of February M. Bardel returned from his secret mission, and on the 5th the Europeans arrived from Debra Tabor.

Immediately on their advent they repaired to the royal tent, from whence, after a lengthened conference, they were despatched to our prison. Messrs. Flad, Steiger, Brandeis, Cornelius (since gone to his rest), Joseph, and Schiller were instantly liberated—a clemency not extended to the more traduced and maligned objects of the royal vengeance. Our visitors, it is true, did not deprive us of all hope of deliverance; on the contrary they assured the Consul that, if he pledged himself that the British Government would not insist on satisfaction for all that had passed, they could without endangering their own lives effect our liberty, and perhaps permission to quit the country; if, however, this stipulation exceeded his authority (as was alleged) they promised to use their influence to secure us an unchained asylum, either at Gaffat or some village in the neighbourhood. Driven about on a sea of doubt and uncertainty, my mind revolted at this protracted, wretched captivity, and recklessly I remarked, “If I am to be deprived of liberty, I don’t care for chains.” These incidents may appear trifling; but if ever a full narrative of our bondage and misery is published, they will explain matters on which a prisoner in a crowded gaol and surrounded by numerous guards dares not dilate.

The interviews between His Majesty and the European workmen were frequent, and often, as we were informed, of long duration. All the Abyssinians expected that the white prisoners would be set at liberty; nay, some even averred that

the King had sworn that we should not much longer sigh in chains. Evening at last terminated this anxious day, and our guards as usual obtruded themselves in disgusting numbers upon us. They had now a less onerous task in counting the prisoners, since our number had considerably diminished; and it was a kind of satisfaction to hear them roar out to their chief "six," and *gánzabatjen*, "our property," a designation by which Rosenthal and myself were familiarly distinguished.

The next afternoon, Zaudye, the chief spy on the Europeans at Gaffat, an office for which nature designed him from his birth, and a couple of other royal functionaries, came to remove the evacuated tent. We inquired when our own would be struck, to which they replied "Teóderos yemüt," (by Theodore's death*), "before many suns have risen and set." The Etjegue, the Prior of all the monks and Father Confessor to His Majesty, also sent us a friendly salutation, accompanied by a significant hint that we should not forget him in more prosperous circumstances. The longed-for to-morrow came and closed, and so another and another, without any change.

Early on the morning of the 4th†, intelligence reached us that the King was angry with M. Bardel, and accused him of being the author of the rupture between him and the Europeans. A little later, a young lad in the service of Mr. Flad, who had picked up a tolerable knowledge of the German language, stealthily crept into our tent bearing the same tidings, with the addition that we should soon be freed and M. Bardel chained. About noon the report received its verification, and M. Bardel, conducted by a detachment of troops, was actually led into our tent, there to await his royal master's pleasure.

* [Literally "may Theodore die!" that is to say, if the assertion made is not true. To tell a lie after such an asseveration is regarded as equivalent to "conspiring the Sovereign's death," and is consequently high treason.—C. B.]

† [This date is erroneous. See page 138.]

Discussion and inquiries were at their height when a most formidable and imposing deputation from the King made their appearance. On former occasions Sháka Ubye, Samuel, or an officer of the household, formed the medium of communication between the King and his white prisoners; but in the present instance, to give *éclat* to the message, greater etiquette was observed. Among the crowd which constituted the delegates, was our old acquaintance Zaudye, Sháka Ubye, Máhdera-Kal (formerly a pupil in the Malta Protestant College), and a host of high functionaries and attendants. Shaka Ubye, after making a scrutinizing survey to see that all the prisoners, in deference to royalty, had girded their *shammas* round the waist, in a calm and deliberate tone said:—"M. Bardel, Djan-hoi (the King) is angry with you because you have misrepresented the prisoners and caused him to chain them. You have also spoken ill of the Negús himself; and you have further, by unfounded assertions, tried to sow distrust and suspicion in his heart against your countrymen at Gaffat." Máhdera-Kal, for the benefit of all, translated every word into French; and the accused, without denying or admitting the charges, simply replied, "How, how?"*

This indirect apology for unmerited sufferings gave birth to fresh hopes of home and dear friends. Every hour now sped on heavily, and every messenger from the Europeans created a thrill of excitement. Day after day, however, was swallowed up in the relentless womb of time, and still the chains hung degradingly on our wrists. At last—I believe it was the 14th of February [1864]—Flad sent us word that all the *employés* and late prisoners were to set out for Gaffat. This was a severe blow to our expectations, though the excess of the disappointment only acted as a tonic in stimulating the moral and physical energies of the soul to renewed courage and patience.

* Should an explanation be required, the white *employés* at Gaffat (among whom is M. Bourgaud, a Frenchman, a friend of M. Bardel) will, as the King's confidants, be best able to furnish it.

Consigned once more for an uncertain period to fetters and a prison, each one according to his peculiar taste sought some occupation to beguile the long hours of the almost never-ending days. The accession to our number introduced also new topics of conversation. Popery, scepticism, and infidelity formed the staple of our discussion during part of the day; whilst, not unfrequently, our evenings were occupied in explaining the tenets of our faith to the loquacious guards.

On the 29th of February the King requested me through Samuel to show him a certain passage of Scripture. Samuel was exceedingly affable—a symptom by which we obtained a cue to the royal sentiments towards us. Our speculations that matters were again more promising were not unfounded; for in the afternoon the royal favourite came back and released Rosenthal from his shackles, who now, together with his wife and babe, was permitted to enjoy the luxury of an unguarded tent; whilst to us he held out the prospect of a speedy, happy change from prison to liberty. I had lost all confidence in his assertions—nay, invariably suspected that when he promised us freedom (a fact now incontestably ascertained) he was toiling to effect our destruction and death.

A few weeks before Easter, His Majesty one noon requested that I should prove to him from the Bible that fasting was not a Divine injunction, nor necessary to salvation. I readily obeyed the mandate, and message after message was carried in rapid succession from the white men's prison to the royal pavilion. Not to prolong the discussion, which, on the part of His Majesty and court had degenerated into a challenge, I briefly observed that fasting, as a help to piety and devotion, was in harmony with the practice of the Apostles; but such fasts, I added, were different, nay, opposed to those enforced by the Church and designed to effect a compromise between sin and good works, as was evident from Isaiah lviii. This chapter His Majesty applied as a censure on his own actions; and I might have had to pay dearly for my temerity, had not,

at the very moment when a loud and ominous cry, re-echoed by scores of voices, "bring Cocab" (*i. e.* myself), a counter order of *tau*, "stop," arrested the dangerous command.

This discussion, which might have sadly terminated had not an invisible power restrained the ire of the King, created, as we were told, a variety of speculations in the army; and it is very likely that the anticipations of an abridgment of Lent would not have been disappointed, had not the Prophet Isaiah too unsparingly denounced injustice and oppression.

Lent passed away, and so also Easter—the season of pardon and mercy to criminals not stained with blood; and yet there was no indication that our fetters would be loosed or our imprisonment come to an end.

And now winter, charged with storms, fogs, and cold, silently stole upon us. Inactivity, the gloom of an impending famine, and other serious causes, excited discontent in the pillage-loving army, and desertions were neither slow nor few. These symptoms of dissatisfaction among the wild hordes that constitute the army did not improve the irascible temper of the King; and the formidable *djiráf* (a long whip) and the mutilating knife were in constant requisition. On one day, within sight of our prison, forty persons had their hands and feet wrenched off, whilst many more perished under the inhuman lash.

On the 12th of May, a day which like one or two more will never be obliterated from my memory, His Majesty had a boisterous public interview with the Abuna or Primate. Epithets neither dignified nor apostolic were most profusely interchanged between the head of the State and the Ruler of the Church. Once I audibly heard my name; and two of my fellow-prisoners understood that it was coupled with the concealment of a curtain and taking of notes. Like a flash of lightning, it struck me that it must refer to a certain morning when Captain Cameron and myself arranged some money matters with the Bishop, which malicious tongues in this

country of inquisitorial espionage had viciously distorted into an unlawful secret communication. The altercation, which was occasionally very loud, and then again more subdued, lasted about an hour; and from the deep silence which pervaded, it was evident that the army did not approve of the quarrel. His Majesty, weary with the contest, abruptly mounted his horse, and followed by a vast concourse dashed furiously across the plain.

Conjecture was now rife among us about the probable issue of the dispute, in which one, if not more of us, were certainly involved. We were not long permitted to indulge in these gloomy musings; the tramp of feet, the hum of numerous voices, and the tinkling of Church umbrellas, announced the approach of an extraordinary procession. Suddenly there was a rush of slaves through the palisaded doorway which led from the camping-ground of royalty to our prison, and then followed a mass of turbaned priests, proud chieftains, and high state functionaries. The Primate, clad in his simple Egyptian garb, with a black silk scarf negligently thrown over his head and face, led the van. There was a boisterous call for "Cocab" and the *Frendjotj*. Precipitately we rushed out of our tent, and in a most deferential attitude confronted this formidable array of Church and State dignitaries.

The royal notary, a tall, sleek personage, now opened a small parcel, and, taking out a portfolio that once belonged to me, thrust his unwashed fingers into a packet of greasy papers, and took out the document that contained the charges, garbled from my pilfered notes, and the letter of Mr. Rosenthal. These were then read, after which Samuel, in a bland persuasive strain, more entreated than commanded that we should state the parties who had been our informants. Rosenthal, who, as Samuel well knew, had had no communication with the Bishop, in a few brief sentences satisfied the inquisitor. Samuel now turned his villanous countenance full upon me, and desired that I should state the sources from whence

I had obtained the statements embodied in the books and papers found in my possession. Fully aware, from the character of the King, that the examination was a serious business, I turned to M. Bardel, and inquired whether he objected if I denied the correctness of the translations. M. Bardel rejoined, "No, for I only read the English; Birru, Samuel, and the *debteras* (scribes) are responsible for the Amharic."

Relieved from the apprehension of implicating any other human being, and particularly a fellow-prisoner, in troubles of no ordinary gravity, I turned to Samuel, and in unsparing expressions deprecated the malice of those who, without any provocation, had sought my destruction by attributing to me language not to be found in my papers.

Then addressing the whole assembly, I said, "What offence have I committed? That I said the King had pillaged certain provinces was no libel, for I saw it myself. That I stated a number of people had been executed at Dubarek, the skulls scattered over the plain attest the fact. That I was misinformed about His Majesty's descent, I must blame the late Mr. Bell, and the Negús's own speech at the capture of a chief*, recorded in the history of his accession to the throne, and at present in the possession of the King himself. That I was not impelled by any ill feeling towards the Negús, my book† incontestibly proves; nay, the very mistake about his origin was an honour in Europe, since, beyond the great waters, not a man's glorious ancestry, but his own deeds shed lustre around his name. The Bishop," I continued, raising my dexter hand, "I honour as a friend; and were he even my enemy, neither diversity in our religious sentiments, nor the dread of danger or the hope of favour, should make me swerve from the truth."

Samuel now interposed, and hypocritically remarked, "We do not wish that you should utter a falsehood, nor does any one

* [See page 118, *ante*.] † 'Wanderings among the Falashas.'

feel disposed to contradict your assertion, that you had no design to misrepresent the origin of the Negús; but there are different ideas in Europe, America, and Asia; and this," he added emphatically, as if anxious by biting sarcasm to vent his stifling rage, "this, you know, is Africa."

The Bishop, who during the whole of that time sat on the bare ground like an unconcerned spectator, now started up, and casting an oblique glance of sympathy towards his white friends, poured forth a torrent of abuse on the King and the whole army of sycophants who swarm around the throne.

"Guards, receive your prisoners!" now shouted Samuel, and instantly we were driven into the tent, whilst the Primate and his cortége retraced their steps through the fence by which they had entered.

The exciting conference acted like a tonic upon my weak, and by sickness enfeebled frame, and, without troubling myself about probability, I said, in a cheerful tone to my fellow prisoners, "I have hardly eluded the shafts of the Angel of Death when I must prepare for foot-chains." No one, I believe, except myself, had any idea that a serious trial was impending over us. About sunset His Majesty came galloping over the plain, and bounding up to his pavilion; he had not yet alighted when M. Bardel, who was outside the tent, hurried quickly in, exclaiming, "the King is coming!" Bustle and confusion for a moment prevailed, and then all was drowned in the shout, "Cocab, *Frendjotj!*" The indignant and vengeance-breathing accents of the King thrilled through my very soul like the knell of all my hopes. "Dog, Falasha, scoundrel, tell me the name of the man who reviled my ancestors, or I'll tear the secret out of your *hailénya*" (stout) "heart!" vociferated the enraged Theodoros.

I attempted to reiterate what I had said to the delegates in the afternoon; but ere I could finish a sentence, I was blinded with buffets, whilst at the same time several fellows violently seized me by the hand, and began to twist round my arms

hard, coarse ropes, formed of the fibres of the Doloussa tree. Rosenthal, simultaneously with myself, experienced a similar treatment. His poor wife, thinking that our last moments had come, distractedly ran into the arms of Captain Cameron. The latter, who also believed that all were about to be butchered, called out to me, "Stern, we shall soon be in heaven!" This the Negús interpreted into an exhortation that I should not compromise the Prelate; and instantly Mrs. Rosenthal, under a shower of blows, was driven with her babe into our tent and then into her own, whilst the Consul and all the other prisoners, with the exception of Mr. Kerans, who was suffering from illness, were thrown on the ground and pinioned.

Generally, criminals under torture are only tied around the upper parts of the arm; but the white miscreants were deemed unworthy of such leniency. From the shoulder down to the wrists the cords were fiendishly tight rolled around the unresisting limb. This being still regarded as insufficient, the swollen, throbbing hands were bound together behind the back, and then other ropes were fastened across the chest, and that, too, with a force that caused the miserable sufferers to agonize for breath. Writhing and quivering in every nerve, we lay in contortious heavings on the hard, bare ground. Some prayed; others groaned; here one in excruciating torments capered about; there, another in desperate frenzy knocked his reclining head on a loose stone, as if determined to end by suicide his career of suffering. The crescent moon shining through a white canopy of clouds, the stillness of the guards, broken by the howling of savage dogs as they careered in quest of prey through the camp, and the moans and sighs of the tortured, formed a scene that beggars language to describe.

His Majesty, immediately on the application of the ropes, quitted the spot and repaired to his tent. Samuel, his face concealed under a black hood, every few minutes made his appearance, and inquired whether I would confess, and, on not

receiving a satisfactory reply, whispered to the guards, "give him another rope round the chest." Three times he repeated his visits, and three times a couple of soldiers jumped on me, and with ardent delight, as if they felt pleasure in torturing a white man, executed the royal behest. To contract the dry ropes the black fiends now and then poured a profusion of cold water down our insensible backs. "Speak," once more repeated the muffled royal messenger—a command which Captain Cameron seconded by shouting, "Stern, Stern, say what you know!"

The agonizing torture had now lasted about three quarters of an hour, and still there was no sign that the tyrant would relent in his cruelty. Physically and mentally prostrated, the hand of faith, in the birth hours of eternity, held confidently on the eternal rock, and prayerfully sighed for release from these earthly pangs and woes. The Negús probably suspecting that we should succumb beneath a protracted torture, and so elude the clutches of further revenge, now ordered the ropes to be removed. Promptly a score of blacks were bending over us and unfastening the cords. This process caused excruciating pain, for the ropes rebounding from the stiff marble limbs, tore away skin and flesh in broad gory shreds.

Infidelity, scepticism, sneers, and scoffs were now all merged in one deep and pathetic cry of anguish, fear, and despair. In compliance with the request of some of my fellow-sufferers, I poured forth the gushing emotions of my heart in a prayer, in which sorrow, sighing, trust, and confidence were sadly blended. Our guards, and every servant who on the approach of the King had decamped, now in a most sympathetic spirit, so characteristic of the transient emotions of the barbarian and savage, rendered us every aid in their power. My own "Kuranyee," the man to whom I was chained, a kind Galla from Enárea, arranged the pallet on which I slept, and also gently swathed my wounded arms in the soft folds of the *shamma*.

A harassing and anxious night was followed by a cheerless and desponding morning. Nervously we anticipated some new harrowing message from the King; but to our delight he rode out, and the forenoon wore away in silence and stoical apathy. Towards noon the chief of our guards came into our prison, and after some desultory remarks urged me to satisfy His Majesty. "Tell those who sent you," I returned, "that I have spoken the truth; and if the King does not believe me, I can swear on this book"* (the Bible, which I raised aloft with my palsied and swollen hand) "that the Bishop never spoke to me on the topic he wishes me to charge upon him." "Well," was the laconic retort; "you will all get ropes again, and that, too, much severer than last night."

Uncertain about our fate, moments, minutes, and hours passed away in torturing suspense. Near evening Samuel, that messenger of evil, again obtruded his hated person upon us. He crouched down near Captain Cameron, and with the utmost assiduity tended his wounds. His affability and condescension emboldened me to ask him why the Negús, after granting me a full pardon, again revived the old affair. A withering scowl gathered over his brow at these words, and as if panting for breath he glared at me a few seconds, and then poured forth a volley of frightful abuse. "Dog," "Falasha," "rascal," &c., "how dare you criticise the King's actions, and obstinately defy his authority? Look here and behold the sufferings you have inflicted on your brethren. This is poor M. Bardel; and do you know who lies here?" pointing to the Consul. "This is Victoria!"

Shattered and prostrate as I was, my whole frame shook and trembled at this unmerited rebuke. Samuel I think noticed this, and bending down to me he whispered confidentially, "Come out, I want to speak to you." Once in the open air,

* It did not then occur to me that the only binding obligation in Abyssinia is an oath "by the death of the King," or the excommunication of the Abuna.

the raging courtier subsided into the smooth flattering knave. Placing his hand affectionately on my aching shoulder, he said, "Don't think that I am angry with you; on the contrary, I admire you; but what possesses you that for the sake of the Bishop, who is neither your countryman nor one of your belief, you incur the wrath of the King, and expose your person to suffering. He is my Abúna (he forgot that he had often told me he was a Protestant), but you are my friend; and I don't care what happens to him if you only (whose money I have eaten), by obliging the Negús, win honour and favours." I shook my head, and the foiled inquisitor hastened away, muttering no very charitable benison on my devoted head.

The shades of night had by this time gathered dark and thick around us. The guards took their station; and the white prisoners, after committing themselves to the guardian care of a Divine Protector, composed themselves to uneasy slumbers. The sudden whisper of voices and the sound of approaching steps made us start from our leather skins. "Cocab!" "Rosenthal!" "Makerer!" roared several voices at once. Leaping mechanically on our feet, we were in an instant out of the tent. Several dark figures in a trice encompassed me, and with ruthless fury dashed their horny hands in my eyes and face. Blow after blow in quick succession descended stunningly upon me, whilst at the same time the ropes were rapidly rolled around my wounded and lacerated arms. "Tie his legs, too, if he does not confess"* rang in deep but distinct accents from the royal pavilion, and was re-echoed from three other lungs who stood in measured distances to send back my reply.

My eyes, dimmed by buffets, started almost out of their sockets, my veins began to swell, my nerves throbbed as if they would burst; and my heart, compressed by the inhuman tightness of the ropes, almost stopped its pulsations. Despairingly

* This fiendish device, which entirely arrests the circulation of the blood, few persons can long resist without succumbing.

I raised my inflamed eyes towards heaven, and prayed that the bitter cup might either pass away from me, or if I was to drain it to the dregs, that the agony might not be protracted.

My head now became dizzy, the cold perspiration coursed down my quivering frame, I felt confused, giddy, and mad. "Samuel, Samuel!" I shrieked in frenzied agony, "What do you want, what do you want?" "Tell the Negús all you have been told by the Abúna," was his calm response. "Oh! my God! my God!" I mentally ejaculated, have I still longer to endure this wasting martyrdom, and seized by a fit of delirium I vociferated in a hoarse, suffocating voice, "Yes! the Abúna often told me that the King was more dreaded, and possessed more power than any of the former sovereigns of Ethiopia, but that his ambition and cruelty ruined and depopulated the country." "Untie the ropes," reverberated far above the cooling breeze, as it swept in refreshing gusts over the torn and bleeding limbs of the sufferer; "untie the ropes, and ask him if he is not a merchant of insects"*. I hesitated to affirm this palpable falsehood; but Samuel with clenched teeth muttered, "Dog, do you want a fresh trial of the ropes?" Again roared in succession the invisible voice, accompanied by a slap in my face from the chief jailer, "ask him whether the ladies in England do not eat rats and mice." Promptly my interrogator, who evidently now pitied me, responded "Yes." "Ask him whether the Queen of England does not sell thread, needles, and tobacco at Massowah?" returned the dismal echo; and before the sound had died away, there was a wild merry shout, accompanied by the gay chuckle of some of the royal ladies. "Ask him whether it is lawful for an Abúna to commit ——"†. Frantic and almost raving, I vehemently roared out "No! no!" The ropes were now entirely removed from

* I had a beautiful collection of insects, and rare, valuable manuscripts, which of course were confiscated by the King.

† Not to sully these pages I omit the rest of the query.

me, and also from Rosenthal, whom, contrary to orders, the guards in the exuberance of their zeal, had also tied; and poor M. Makerer was questioned about certain language insidious malice reported that he had uttered at Massowah.

Elated with his success, although it must have been obvious to every rational being that I could not have been for days and days the guest of the Primate, without conversing on the pillage of different provinces, among which Djenda, the domain of the Metropolitan, formed no exception, yet, as he had gained his object, in the flash of delight he ordered a liberal supper of bread, hydromel, and potent *draki* for his wretched victims. Supported by two blacks, I tottered back into my tent, where I sank down, more dead than alive, on my painful couch. Immediately on my entrance, Captain Cameron, in that perfect absence of mind by which all the events of the outer world are excluded, abruptly called across the tent, "Stern, please throw me over the tobacco pouch." And he might have added, a star, or the crescent moon to light his pipe; for the one would have been as possible for me as the other.

Samuel, accompanied by a Galla slave, charged with a formidable horn of strong *draki*, after about half an hour's interval, stumbled into our tent; he had evidently fortified himself, after the previous toils, by a few *berrilles*, or bottles of old hydromel. And now some glasses more of ardent spirits wonderfully stimulated his garrulity. The region of the lost could alone have equalled the revolting sight presented at that moment by our prison. There, guarded by a band of dark savages, and chained like untamed beasts, are crowded together in a tattered tent, a party of white captives, in whose desponding forlorn looks sorrow and suffering, trouble and care, have written their indelible lines. In the centre of their frail tenement, squat several ragged savages around a flickering, unsteady taper, with their dilated optics wistfully directed to the operations of a smooth-faced Galla lad, who is pouring out of a gigantic horn a strong smelling liquid. A grinning figure,

girded to the waist, receives the cup, and hands it, bowing obsequiously, to the criminals, who in formal etiquette quaff the potent draught. This is a faint, and indeed only a faint, outline of the picture we then formed.

As I could not move, Samuel, with great tenderness, held the cup to my fevered lips, and in a sympathetic tone said, "Drink, if only a few drops, to evince your regard for the King." Covered with bruises, sores, and scars, I did not know how to lie or sit, without enduring the most excruciating tortures. Some one proposed that we should take opium, and thus elude the tyranny of the despot, and close our career of misery. My giddy and whirling brain rapturously caught the suggestion; and had my fingers been able to perform their wonted functions, I should, unless a gracious Providence had restrained me, have opened my small basket, and in the frenzy of the moment partaken with some or all my fellow-sufferers of the fatal drug. Mrs. Rosenthal had a similar craving for laudanum; and, as she afterwards told me, she considered it quite a mercy that the dangerous phial was not within her reach, as in the complete prostration of mind and body she might have terminated her own and her poor babe's troublesome existence. Somnolency, that angel of pity, gradually closed our eyes, and in a state of dreamy stupefaction the night glided away. At dawn, the sinister visage of Samuel appeared at the door of our tent. "Cocab," he commenced, in a hollow, sepulchral voice, to which the previous night's debauch, more than the message of evil he was about to deliver, imparted a fearful solemnity—"Cocab, His Majesty knows that you are not afraid to die; but don't think that he intends to kill you; on the contrary, he will preserve your life, and torture you till the flesh rots on your bones." "That this," continued the truculent delegate, "is not a vague threat, the last two nights and many similar ones still in reserve will prove. Do, therefore, satisfy the Negús, or, by —, those ropes will anon extort by force what you now deny as a favour."

The sight of the torturing instruments, which lay in a heap in a corner of our tent, caused a dizziness in my head; and, raising my racking frame, I said, "Samuel, I told you last night my conversation with the Bishop; and if that does not satisfy you, God's will be done: I won't tell a lie." The implacable inquisitor, touched by my sufferings, paused a moment, and then resumed once more, "Let us admit that the Bishop did not furnish you with the false account of His Majesty's lineage; still, as he has proofs, you will never persuade him that the statement did not emanate from some of his priests or domestics."

I now recollected that one of the Abúna's shums (stewards) whom I then thought safe at Massowah or in Egypt, where, for aught I know, he may now also roam about, had many a time amused me by giving episodes out of the history of the Negús. And as evil tongues might have repeated these desultory conversations, I said "Gebra Egziabher frequently spoke to me about the exploits of the King, and at my request also gave me some of the particulars relative to his birth and education. But never did he utter a word to depreciate His Majesty; for he knew that in Egypt and Europe, where he had been, a man was respected on account of his actions, and not on account of his origin." "I will report this to Negús," was his laconic reply.

Slowly the weary hours of terror and dread rolled on. Our nerves were horribly shattered, and our minds too would have been unhinged, had not religion, with her solacing influence, smoothed the asperities and hardships of our existence. The Bible, prayers, a morning and evening exposition of an appropriate passage, were the exercises in which we regularly engaged. No bitter gibes, no harsh expression, no impure language, characterized our intercourse; religion formed a wonderful bond of harmony; and when I looked on the devout countenances that then hung over the inspired page as I commented on the selected text, I cherished the hope that the

clouds so big with wrath had been charged with a flood of everlasting mercy.

Our affairs, to our infinite satisfaction, suddenly ceased to occupy the royal mind, and few incidents occurred to interrupt our melancholy tranquillity. One afternoon there was a suppressed cry, "the King, the King;" which caused quite a panic in our tent. His Majesty, accompanied by a shield-bearer, it is true, had strayed on our prison premises, but for what purpose remains a mystery to this day. On another occasion Basha Engeda, on the guards being changed, pointed me out as a special object of interest—a distinction which, under existing circumstances, I did not much admire. An apparent peace between the Negús and the Primate also gave rise to various conjectures among the prisoners.

One evening a young lad in the service of the Consul, who, together with other servants, had again returned to his master, crept down near me and adroitly conveyed a small piece of paper into my dead and feelingless hand. I hastily put it into my Bible, thinking it was a letter from Mr. Flad—a mistake which the Arabic character soon exposed. The note was from the Bishop, and commenced—"To my Brother in Christ, servant to the Prophets and Apostles," &c. &c. It then adverted to the sufferings all, and especially myself, had endured, on his account, and, quoting certain appropriate passages of Scripture, it concluded abruptly with a remark about money.

By the dim glimmer of the guards' light, it occurred to me that the Abúna expected that ere long I should have to endure a fresh ordeal of the Negús's retributive vengeance, and that, doubtful about the issue, he wanted me to send him an order for the money I owed him. This warning, for such my unhinged imagination fancied it to be, gave me a momentary shock, and, grasping the ill-boding missive between my numbed fingers, I held it clandestinely to the light, and to my satisfaction discovered that, instead of an order for the money I had borrowed, it was a generous offer to advance me more.

This incident, trifling as it may seem, inspired me and also my fellow-prisoners with a vague hope that in the reconciliation with the Abúna our own affairs might receive a just and honest consideration—an anticipation that would not have been disappointed, had the pride of the suspicious and offended monarch been pacified by the timely arrival of the still expected letter from Her Majesty. Samuel no longer obtruded his undesirable presence upon us. Once he brought some Italian medals and mathematical measuring instruments into the tent of Rosenthal, and requested to know their use. Rosenthal advised him to ask me, upon which he returned in a petulant tone; “always Cocab!”

The attitude in which I am compelled to carry on my clandestine correspondence is most painful. Bent double by manacles about three-eighths of a yard long between the ankles, linked to another a few inches shorter to the right-hand wrist, I crouch down with the paper half-concealed in my lap, and scribble away. The posture is not adapted to make the pen run easily; but this is of no consequence, the occupation dispels, for at least a few hours, the gloomy reveries in which my mind unwillingly indulges, and furnishes you and my friends with a faithful outline of my own and my fellow-prisoners' sad history; and this amply compensates for the pain which the task inflicts on my chain-crippled frame.

November 1, 1865.

The Abyssinian winter, accompanied by storms, rain, fogs, cold, and all sorts of other discomforts, had now fairly set in. Almost every noon, the sky became darkened; and lowering clouds, amidst the reverberations of thunder, poured down deluging floods; our frail cotton tent, which had already for more than four months resisted the wear and tear of guards and prisoners, sun and wind, notwithstanding the patching of Pietro and Makerer's skill, admitting the pelting torrent. During the day the horrors of the tempest were still mitigated

by the scanty coverings in which each one could muffle up his shivering frame ; but by night, when wedged between suspicious guards, who tremblingly rose at the slightest clang of the heavy chains, one was forced positively to press the cold earth as one's couch. The King, two or three times in riding out, gave a musing glance across our fence, which led us to anticipate that our wretched apology for a shelter would soon be exchanged for some more substantial covering—an expectation that was never destined to be realized. Condemned to wet and filth, our misery was intensified by the foul aroma of the coarse guards, who in crowds obtruded their offensive persons upon us. Goaded to desperation, we sent one afternoon to Samuel, and requested him to regulate the watch. Samuel mentioned it to the King ; and the reply was, “ If they don't like to come in contact with my people, give them foot-chains, and let only two soldiers watch in the tent.” This unexpected infliction of fresh suffering gave us an unmistakeable clue to his Majesty's sentiments towards us ; but without allowing such an ebullition of hatred to depress our spirits, we determined henceforth passively to endure every hardship that might still fall to our lot.

That terrible scourge, the small-pox, which had already for more than six weeks ravaged the camp, in the absence of every precaution to arrest its progress, spread with increased virulence through the crowded lines of tents, hurrying promiscuously men, women, and children to an untimely grave. An incipient famine accelerated its devastations, and multiplied the funeral processions, which, amidst the melancholy chants of priests and the wail of mourners, everywhere traversed the gloomy camp. His Majesty, to dissipate the panic which prevailed through the thinning ranks of the army, interdicted the usual lamentations for the dead ; but the voice of nature could not be stifled by royal edicts ; so in defiance of the stick and the whip, the shrieks and lamentations of the bereaved rang all night in wild cadences over hill and dale.

Prompted by sanitary motives, on July 5th the camp was removed to Assosso, about six miles W.S.W. from Gondar. To our surprise we received no official intimation that we were to change our abode; and it was quite a relief to our eyes to gaze on the stockaded acclivity above our prison, without the trial of beholding the despot or his myrmidons. On the 6th of July, towards evening, Basha Deresa, the commander of the fusiliers, paid us a visit, and ordered our foot-chains to be removed from the hand-chains: the operation of unrivetting the massive irons required the efforts of eight powerful savages; and even these had to exert their whole strength to accomplish the onerous work. We were immediately linked together in pairs by shackles fastened round the wrists. The wonted insolence of the conceited Ethiop, which had been often enough exhibited towards us, was on the present occasion not omitted; and many a vile sarcasm during the hammering of the iron was expended on the defenceless white prisoners.

On the following morning a formidable guard came to escort us to the camp. Captain Cameron, and myself, who at our own option were chained together, formed the most unhappy pair for the ride. Enervated by suffering and sickness, I was in no condition to manage the young and untrained mule which I received orders to mount: nor was my companion, whose nerves and mind were dreadfully shaken, better fitted for the novel exercise.

On arriving at the camp we were conducted up a rugged ascent, on the summit of which, exposed to the cool and refreshing breeze, stood the royal tents. A strong palisaded enclosure defended every encroachment on this forbidden ground. We were ordered to alight close to the rigorously guarded entrance, where, together with hundreds of deserters, thieves, murderers, and other low criminals, we had to await the mandate for our location. At last the order came that we were to march to the front of the camp, occupied by the chief of the fusiliers. Ever since the imprisonment of the Consul we

always had a spot for our tent within the royal fence; but as each indignity to the detested *Frendjotj* was supposed to enhance the glory of the despot and the lustre of his name, we were no longer deemed worthy to enjoy the not very enviable distinction conferred on the more exalted native offenders. Our fragile prison, which the journey had not improved, was at last, with difficulties that appeared almost insurmountable, lashed to the pole, and then to secure this unsafe abode an impassable thorn fence was raised around it. All the other prisoners, above three hundred in number, among whom there were not a few who had more to deplore the caprice of the law than the perpetration of crime, were shut up in an enclosure separated from ourselves by a thin acacia partition.

On August 19th, 1864, we heard that the long-expected letter from Her Majesty had at length arrived, and that the Negús had sent for the Europeans at Gaffat; then again we were told that the order had been countermanded, and again that they were on the road. These contradictory rumours were not quite unfounded. A letter, it is true, had arrived from the coast, but it was not the document the King expected; and the Gaffat *employés* had also been desired to come to the camp and settle our affairs; but the vacillating tyrant, probably at the instigation of Samuel, once more abandoned his generous designs.

Gondar, the capital of Abyssinia, owing to its sympathies with rebels, never enjoyed the particular good graces of the Monarch. The population, confiding in the number of their churches and the wealth of its merchants, quaffed their hydromel and indulged their vicious passions in heedless security. Their fatal dream of undisturbed repose was, however, destined to experience a grievous reverse. A complaint that the bread and meat provided by the town were bad in quality and limited in quantity, afforded the Negús a favourable opportunity to satisfy his long cherished resentment. An exorbitant fine was immediately imposed on the mistaken inhabitants; and on meet-

ing with a slight opposition to his ruinous demand, the whip and rope were energetically used to enforce compliance. Despoiled and pillaged, the wretched populace deceived themselves with the illusive hope that the heaviest calamity was past; but they had not yet sounded the depth of their Sovereign's vengeance, and only felt its full weight when they saw their homes on fire and demolished by the devouring flames. The old metropolis, with the exception of the churches, being reduced to ashes, his Majesty, to perpetuate his Neronian achievement on a miniature scale, proclaimed Assosso the new capital of the empire. To outdo his predecessors, all sorts of grand plans were projected to embellish the royal city. Churches, palaces, workshops and gardens, vying with each other in matchless splendour, had already assigned to them their appropriate spots. These imaginary schemes occupied the dull princes of the whole army, and led every one to believe that the camp would remain stationary for many months to come. Surrounded by everything revolting, we still preferred our offensive prison to travelling in chains. Unexpectedly, about the beginning of September 1864, the vision of a new capital, which had for some time delighted the ragged hordes, was abandoned, and the camp removed to Shangarou.

On the 17th the imperial blacksmith, accompanied by a score of menials, came to relieve us of our foot-chains. As we were to start the same forenoon, celerity was indispensable; and the important functionary, assisted by his servile subordinates, manipulated most dexterously the chains on our legs and arms to accomplish his task. Shackled in couples, however, round our wrists, and guarded by a band of armed fusiliers, we were now led out of the narrow enclosure, in which we had been closely confined for more than two months. The King, more intent on torturing than on destroying the hated and envied *Frendjotj*, had given orders that we should be provided with mules; but the escort, being well aware that prisoners are not objects of much consideration, did not feel

disposed to comply with this high behest. The ride from Gondar to Assosso had not increased our zest for bestriding a mule in fetters ; and, at my suggestion, all except Mrs. Rosenthal, who had a baby in her arms, consented to test the strength of their legs.

It was said, and the rumour was also true, that His Majesty, on coming together with his European *employés*, would finish our business, and either allow us to leave the country or else keep us at Gaffat. The capricious tyrant this time would have kept his word, had not Mr. Samuel, that compound of malice, hatred, and cunning, by crafty insinuations and positive lies (as we know for certain), neutralized his master's designs. We remained at Sergu from September 23rd to October 14th, and then set forward again. The journey from this to the capital of Begamider took us fifteen days, of which three only were spent in actual travelling.

On reaching Debra Tabor, we expected that a messenger from Gaffat would meet us ; but in vain we wistfully strained our eyes in all directions to discover the face of a known servant or the white countenance of a *Frendji*. Probably the majority, if not all, would have gladly come to see us, had they not dreaded the cruel tyrant, whose proximity damps, if it does not entirely extinguish, every feeling of sympathy towards those who have incurred his displeasure. As we did not obtain unsolicited intelligence from our friends, who were located about two miles' walk from our resting-place, we sent one of our servants for that purpose to Mr. Flad. The messenger returned in the evening loaded with potatoes, bread, milk, and a small note, which contained the tantalizing news that His Majesty, during the two or three conferences with the Gaffat white workmen, had always carefully avoided alluding to our affairs. Once, during a subsequent interview, Mr. Waldmeier ventured to advert to our position ; but the Negús did not deign to notice his remark on that disagreeable topic. Several days (ah ! several centuries !) of heart-burning suspense had

already elapsed, and still there was no other amelioration of our condition beyond that we had an ample supply of wholesome food from our friends.

About the 29th of October we were informed that the King, being moved by the potent hydromel and *draki* of his foreign *employés* *, had, in a fit of magnanimity, urged them to solicit

* [After having sent to the printer the MS. of what is printed above, and whilst correcting for the press that portion of my work (page 261) in which I have referred to the present note (not having been able to insert it there), I saw in the 'Athenæum' of November 10th a notice of the following work recently published by the Early English Text Society :—"The Book of Quinte Essence, or the Fifth Being, that is to say, Man's Heaven. Edited by F. J. Furnivall."

I have not seen this curious work ; but the following notice of its contents, taken *verbatim et literatim* from the columns of the 'Athenæum,' will fully serve the purpose for which I now refer to it :—

"'The Book of Quinte Essence' is described as 'a treatise in English, briefly drawn out of the book of quintessence, in Latin, that Hermes the prophet and King of Egypt, after the flood of Noah, father of philosophers, had, by the revelations of an angel of God, to him sent.' Mr. Furnivall himself says, 'This tract appears to be a great fuss about Spirits of Wine, how to make it, and get more or less tipsy on it, and what wonders it will work, from making old men young and dying men well, to killing lice.' The compounder states that his mixture is the burning water, *aqua vite*, or, according to the name by which philosophers keep its character secret, quintessence. It is recommended as a panacea that will overcome Death himself, always excepting that the patient has reached 'the term that is set of God' that no man may escape'—a saving clause of an early quack character. It is also to be observed that this spirit, for those who lack jollity or medicine, for those who prefer to take it under the plea of lack of health, is intended by the inventor only for 'evangelic men.' This inventor, horrified at the idea of the secret getting into the possession of sick tyrants, who, by its use, may regain their lost vigour, recommends it to the keeping of Christ. Thus, the tipplers who quaffed their walnut-shell or their egg-shell full, might measure their righteousness by the amount of their exhilaration. The author of 'The Book of Quinte Essence' shows how life may be rendered physically joyful; its date is of the fifteenth century; and men learned therein how they might be cured of every disease except *hereditary* leprosy."

any favour they would, and that, if it were not his throne or his crown, it should be granted, even if it were for the liberation of the European prisoners. Acting on a Scriptural precedent, our

As it was in Europe in the middle ages, so it is at the present day in Abyssinia, where the art of distillation is unknown; and hence it may be understood how great is the importance of persons who, like the Emperor's European workmen, can distil spirits. To that monarch, whose habits of intemperance are notorious, they must have become a necessity.

I do not make this remark in any unkind spirit, as Mr. Layard did when speaking in the House of Commons of the Basle Missionaries as "trading in brandy" (see page 110). Even supposing they did so, there would be nothing incompatible in their making, or even selling, honey-wine (hydromel), beer, and spirits. We have at home men of unquestionable piety and goodness, who are brewers, distillers, and wine-merchants. But, from an expression in a letter from Mr. Stern to his wife dated Magdala, August 25th, 1866, just received, it would seem that the spirits are made only for the Emperor's private use. He says, "like the rest of our fellow-prisoners, we drank his health in good *araki* provided for that purpose from the royal distillery."

Theodore's failing in this respect is no new matter. As long ago as the year 1853, Baron Theodore von Heuglin described him as "a hard fighter and a hard drinker." ("Ein tapferer Kämpfer in der Feldschlacht und hinter dem Tedsch-Becher."—*Reisen in Nord-Ost-Afrika*, p. 45.) This was before he became Emperor, at which time I was in Mauritius, where my Abyssinian servants gave me strange descriptions of his excesses and of their consequences. Whether after his accession he reformed in this respect as in others, Mr. Plowden has not said in his report (see page 35); but if he did, it can only have been for a short time. I remember having shipped to Aden sundry cases of "Vermouth" for the private use of his Imperial Majesty, and I am afraid that the habit has now become inveterate. It will have been seen that most of the acts of violence perpetrated on Mr. Stern and the other captives have occurred in the evening, after the Emperor had been carousing (see pages 113, 140, 365, 369). If, as his panegyrist Mr. Plowden admits, one of the "worse points in his character" was "his violent anger at times" (*loc. cit.*), even at the most favourable period of his career when all was prosperous, how must it be when inflamed by drink, now that his temper has become soured by reverses and disappointments! C.B.]

friends (I suppose) merely expressed their delight at enjoying the royal countenance and favour. Two evenings after the above, His Majesty again drained a good number of *berilles* (bottles) of the *Frendjotj's* generous brew, and, once more exhilarated by the excellent beverage, repeated the former request a little more urgently. This time they were more bold, or thought the moment more opportune to intercede in behalf of our freedom. The request was instantly granted, and all were to be released from their chains, except the Frenchmen Bardel and Makerer.

This was about the beginning of November, 1864; on the 5th of the same month the cheering tidings were communicated to us that Kantiba Hailu, the late Governor of Gondar, a man highly esteemed by the King and the European workmen, had received orders to proceed to the camp, and to conduct us and our French fellow-sufferers, free from fetters, to a new home in the vicinity of our countrymen. We were already in spirit revelling in the luxury of unshackled limbs, when, at the very moment we expected to hear the tramp of our friends' mules and to grasp their extended hands, one messenger followed by another came to announce that the humane intentions of His Majesty had been defeated by a report of Samuel, confirmed by Dedjatj Bariau, the Governor of Tigre, that a British general and troops had landed at Masowah, and that another great man (whether French or English, was not stated) had also arrived in Sennaar, and that both publicly declared they were determined to move towards Abyssinia, to effect our deliverance either by mediation or by force of arms. This unexpected blight of our fond anticipations came upon us like a thunder-clap; but the mind, when pressed down by a succession of calamities, either becomes callous and apathetic, or tries to gain calmness and comfort to the troubled heart in prayer and the promises of the inspired page. . . .

On November 7th I got a note from Mr. Flad, which con-

tained the dreaded intelligence that we were the next day to be carried to Magdala, the penal settlement of the *Negúsa Negest*, King of Kings. . . . On the 8th we quitted Debra Tabor, the goal where we confidently imagined that our manacles would be removed and our captivity terminate. Our first resting-place was San Myeda, the spot where the late Coptic Patriarch, the Ambassador of the Viceroy of Egypt, was incarcerated by the artful barbarian, whose smiles and suavity ought never to have duped a white man. . . .

Our party, which since we left Begamider had considerably increased, did not much tend to beguile the fatigue and toil of the route. About a dozen criminals, almost all of whom were *in puris naturalibus*, or nearly so, with long heavy wooden yokes round their necks, were not exactly the companions that Europeans in Africa, even in the greatest emergency, would ever dream of being obliged to have for daily associates, although we might pity their forlorn condition; but the mighty name of Britain, respected as it is throughout the universe, is no palladium to travellers, missionaries, or a Consul, in the powerful realm of the boasted descendant of Solomon. . . . Many a sinister black visage was turned upon us, and many an ill-boding sentence was uttered against us, as we were driven through a narrow gap up the dreaded Amba. That his Majesty had been bragging about his European captives was evident from the deportment of the wild hordes; and this idea, which was uppermost in the mind of a few of us, did not tend to soothe the agony of the lacerated. Gasping and panting, we at length emerged out of a rude, strong gateway on the summit of the Amba. Again a short halt was ordered, and then once more all hurried forward towards a collection of sugar-loaf-shaped huts—the dwellings of his Majesty's court*. All in a twinkling lay prostrate in the

* [A description of Amba Magdala, where the captives remained confined till February 24th, 1866, and whither they have again been taken, together with Mr. Rassam and his suite, is given in page 144.—C. B.]

dust; but the profound obeisance, instead of meeting a response, remained unnoticed amidst the boisterous shouts for *áraki*. The malefactors and their servile guards paused; but, as the Negús was indulging in his orgies, we were driven on to our home—the prison.

From MR. ROSENTHAL.

End of April, 1865.

You will no doubt within a short time hear of the letter of the Rev. H. A. Stern, in which he gives a sketch of the sufferings we have had to undergo since our arrival in this country, with the circumstances which accelerated them, in order to prevent ill-disposed persons from misconstruing his course of action here. Although the history of his sufferings comprises that of my own, with the exception of the beating which he received at first, yet, as Mrs. R. and the child shared our lot in part on the one hand, and were separated from me for about two months on the other, during which period I neither saw nor heard from them, you can easily imagine that these additional bereavements greatly contributed to my own sorrows.

. . . . I only add a few things which concern more especially Mrs. R. and myself, as Mr. Stern has written all concerning himself to the time of my seizure and our imprisonment together. From that period our lot was one, so that I can safely refer you to his letter. After the imprisonment of Mr. Stern, I was in continual fear lest something untoward should happen to me, because I gave to him some letters to forward, one a missionary report to the Society, also to several friends delineations of the character and prospects of our work, to interest them in the same; and one was descriptive of our journey from the coast to the interior, and a six months' residence in this country, to which some personal remarks were added; these were among his seized papers.

Our anxiety was only too soon verified by the event. We were taken prisoners on the fifth of November, 1863. Our animals, grain (stored up for the next six months), clothes, books, medicine, money—in fact, all we possessed was seized, and we were for the next three days subjected to a series of insults, inconveniences, and wants in our house, and our servants were compelled to grind and bake day and night. In spite of this we were nearly starving for lack of bread. Some time after this event the personal effects of Mrs. R. were returned, but only to be retaken subsequently and finally; and she and our child were left entirely destitute of clothing.

When we arrived at Gondar, I was chained hand and foot, and put in a separate tent from that of Mrs. R. Both were filled with soldiers to excess. Mrs. R. was actually obliged to beg and cry to have permission for two female servants to sleep by her side. On the Friday following my fetters were removed, and I joyfully anticipated entire release; but, imagine my surprise and disappointment when, instead of that, I was brought before a gorgeous assembled multitude to be judged. Mr. Stern and myself were both condemned to death according to the dictates of the *Fetha Negast*, a book firmly believed by the Abyssinians to be of Divine origin; and although I repeatedly begged for mercy during the examinations, I only received the answer to reply to the questions put to me. We both made one more attempt to be heard, Mr. S. in Arabic, and myself in Amharic; but were simply told, “*buckra*” (tomorrow). During the trial two different soldiers, holding my chains, fell down at my side, and were carried off like corpses.

We were now confined to the same tent, and hand and foot-irons were put on in such a manner that we could not stand upright. My fetters were of a specially cruel construction. Usually the manacles are separated by two or three links of chain; mine, however, constantly kept my feet within one-eighth of an inch close together; and when I desired to move I was obliged to crawl upon both hands and feet. These are designated “slave-irons.”

I omit the intervening time that elapsed until the chaining of the Consul and the other Europeans. Mr. Stern's and my condition were a little ameliorated before that proceeding; but what Mrs. Flad, Mrs. R., and the poor children suffered in Gondar during the 3rd of January, 1864, and the two following days, baffles description. They were maltreated, received the most abusive language, and were deprived of food. In their extremity, Mrs. R. opened the Bible at random, and her eyes fell upon the composing words of Joseph to his brethren—"Fear not; I will nourish you and your little ones." God did bless the supply of Mrs. R.'s nourishment, so that she kept the two poor babes, ours and Mrs. Flad's, for three days from famishing. They were, however, soon brought to the camp, and at the end of January permitted to visit us. O, my God! what a meeting was this of mine with my poor wife and child, after two months' separation under such trying circumstances!

I pass over the liberation of the German missionaries, a painful illness and operation of Mrs. R., and a dangerous fever of the child, and come to Sunday, February 29th. On that day the King asked something of Mr. Stern in reference to the Bible, which I happened to answer, and being thus informed he gave immediate orders for the opening of my chains. I was indulged also to occupy the same tent with Mrs. R., within a few yards of the European prisoners; and, thank God, we both say, we were never afterwards separated.

Thus we remained until that fearful evening the 12th of May, only alluded to by Mr. S., when we were tortured. Mrs. R., hearing our groans and cries, rushed out of her tent towards us, and, with the baby in her arms (who was then only ten months old), was beaten, knocked down, trod upon, and dragged back to the tent senseless. The marks of this treatment were visible after many days. That evening the poor child relapsed, and remained weak and sickly for many months. When Mrs. R. revived, she lamented and agonized over the

supposed death of myself and Mr. S. I was at last conducted back to her, lacerated, and with the distorted features of a madman. The same tragedy was reperformed the following evening upon three of us, and Mrs. R.'s sad pleasure consisted afterwards in healing our impotent arms. I was again chained, and have remained so ever since.

We passed the incessant rains of a tropical winter in an old torn tent, experienced many disappointed hopes, were dragged two and two, chained together, across the country on mules, every moment in danger of pulling one another off our animals and breaking our necks; and on arriving here were huddled together with about 200 persons of various ranks, ages, and sexes, with real or supposed crimes attached to them, and variously chained, and stuffed into a place about sixty feet in diameter. Mrs. R. is not, nor ever was, tied, although she is considered a prisoner.

September 16th, 1865.

You remember that the whole affair of our imprisonment turns around the Government Letter. Had the same arrived a year ago, without any further comment, it is probable that we had long ago enjoyed liberty. Would the same were presented, even with ceremony or without it—delivered either by an Englishman or an Abyssinian! we are pretty confident that, if not permitted to leave the country, our imprisonment would at least be at an end.

So the whole matter finishes in this:—On account of this oft-mentioned letter, kept in some secluded spot of the universe for some time longer, we have no other hope but to remain to an indefinite period in Magdala, or some other unpleasantly elevated locality of the Abyssinian highlands, until its arrival. The difference, however, which now exists is this:—Formerly the King only desired an answer. The proposal was made to him that a gentleman should forward that document, and at the same time effect a reconciliation between the

two parties. It only stands to reason that the Negús expects, as the case remains, that both should be carried out. And the one without the other would not be sufficient to effect our release.

There is still another and serious consideration. His Majesty has been informed so often of the arrival at Massowah of the letter, without its making its appearance *here*, that if it does not come soon, or that gentleman at Massowah does not find an open road to forward it, His Majesty might think that all the letter affair is a delusion, only practised upon him to get us quietly out of the country. And if he has once made up his mind *this way*, it might be a bad job for us. You are aware that untutored minds are very much open to suspicion. We should not forget, however, that Mr. Rassam in his generosity offered to come, and would have come too had he received permission. *

But one must take the King as he is. He was in full power, and perhaps did not care for friendship *then*, and therefore not for the causing of mediation. His pride was wounded in not receiving an answer to his letter. This he wanted, and nothing else. Had it arrived at the first, there is no doubt he would have said, "I am satisfied now; they have offended me, but I have shown them that I have my own will." And with this our experience in prison life would have ceased. It should be remembered, however, that no one could imagine that such a kind proposal should have been refused. According to our notion a letter from so high a personage (as the Queen) should be delivered with every decorum and *éclat*! In an Abyssinian dictionary it may be, "anyhow, so long as it does come."

VI.

Petition to the EMPEROR THEODORE from the Relatives of the Captives, and Correspondence between HIS MAJESTY and Dr. BEKE.

PETITION.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, One God.

May this letter from the distressed relatives of the unfortunate white prisoners at Magdala come to His Most Excellent Majesty, Théodore, by the Grace of God, King of the Kings of Ethiopia.

Are you well, O King? Are you very well? We are all well in health, thanks be to God! though sorely troubled in mind, because those we love have incurred your Royal displeasure.

Humbly at the feet of your Majesty we plead for mercy and pardon to the wretched Europeans who have been so long in captivity.

The wife of Stern and her four young and helpless children mourn the absence, and need the support of, a tender and beloved husband and father.

It has pleased God to take the husband of the mother of Ellen Rosenthal, and she and her other two children are poor, and she has now only her daughter and her daughter's husband, Rosenthal, to whom she could look for support and comfort in her old age.

The aged mother of Consul Cameron is pining with grief that her darling son should have been kept so long from her widowed arms. She longs to see him once more, and to bless him before she dies*.

Kerans is the beloved son of a father and mother, who,

* This consolation was denied to the poor old lady. She died on November 2nd, 1865, as is mentioned in page 216 of this work.

through his long captivity, are deprived of the prop of their declining years.

The brothers and sisters and other relatives of all the prisoners are weeping to behold the dear faces that have been so long withholden from them.

All appeal to your Majesty's good feelings as a husband and a father, earnestly imploring you to comfort the afflicted and to dry the tears of the sorrowful, by extending to their unhappy relatives the clemency and magnanimity which you have so often shown even to your bitterest enemies.

We ask for mercy in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Holy Gospel it is written, "Forasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

And may the Holy Trinity reward you a hundredfold: and we, your suppliants, will ever pray that blessings may await you and your whole house, that you may overcome all your enemies, that prosperity may attend your reign, and that your children's children to all generations may sit on the throne of Menilek and Yekuna Amlak.

- CHARLOTTE E. STERN, Wife of the Rev. H. A. Stern.
 CHARLOTTE E. STERN, Daughter of the same.
 EVELINA C. STERN, Daughter of the same.
 LOUISA M. STERN, Daughter of the same.
 HENRY A. STERN, Son of the same.
 ALETTA CAMERON, Mother of Consul Cameron,
 M. DESBOROUGH, Sister of the same.
 L. DESBOROUGH, Brother-in-law of the same.
 E. BLACKALL, Sister of the same.
 A. BLACKALL, Brother-in-law of the same.
 L. C. DESBOROUGH, Nephew of the same.
 C. H. DESBOROUGH, Niece of the same.
 LAWRENCE O. KERANS, M.D., Father of Lawrence Kerans.
 AUGUSTA A. KERANS, Mother of the same.
 T. S. KERANS, Brother of the same.

GEO. KERANS, Brother of the same.
 ROBERT KERANS, Brother of L. KERANS.
 LYONS KERANS, Brother of the same.
 ANNA KERANS, Sister of the same.
 SARAH KERANS, Sister of the same.
 ELIZABETH KERANS, Sister of the same.
 C. H. PURDAY, Father-in-law of the Rev. H. A. Stern.
 MARY ANN PURDAY, Mother-in-law of the same.
 M. A. PURDAY, Sister-in-law of the same.
 ELIZABETH C. PURDAY, Sister-in-law of the same.
 WM. R. MORGAN, Clerk, Brother-in-law of the same.
 C. H. PURDAY, Jun., Brother-in-law of the same.
 J. T. PURDAY, Brother-in-law of the same.
 F. S. PURDAY, Brother-in-law of the same.
 S. T. MORGAN, Sister-in-law of the same.
 M. YOUNG, Mother of Mrs. Rosenthal.
 E. EISNER, Sister of the same.
 L. EISNER, Brother-in-law of Mr. Rosenthal.
 E. ROSENTHAL, Sister of the same.

Letter from Dr. Beke accompanying the foregoing Petition.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, One God.

This letter comes from the Englishman, Charles Theodore * Beke, to His Most Excellent Majesty, Teódros, by the Grace of God, King of the Kings of Ethiopia.

* When I first went to Abyssinia in 1840, I took "Theodore" as my travelling name. I could not use my own name, Charles or *Károlos*, as this would immediately have been changed to *Kérelós* or Cyril. I therefore adopted Theodore from my motto, *A Deo omne Donum*,—in Greek, *Εκ Θεου παν Δωρον*. That it happened to be the name of the *Teódros* of prophecy was no objection at that time; but since Kassai has assumed this name, he does not like it to be borne by any one else. I have therefore thought it well to retain the English form, Theodore. I could not consistently drop the name altogether, being known by it in Abyssinia. *

I am a countryman of Plowden and Bell, who were both my friends. Twenty years ago, before those friends settled in Abyssinia, I went through the whole of that country. I found the country to be very good, but divided into many provinces, always fighting one against another; and I knew that, unless a strong hand gave peace and security, Abyssinia never could become a rich and powerful kingdom.

Many years passed away, and I heard that all the Princes of Abyssinia had been conquered by one great and powerful Monarch, who had seated himself on the throne of Menilek. I longed once more to visit Abyssinia, but the death of Plowden and Bell disheartened me.

I then went to Jerusalem with my wife, and we visited the Holy Places; and afterwards we were sitting quietly at home, when the news arrived that Consul Cameron and the English Missionaries had incurred your Royal displeasure.

When the relatives of the captives heard this, they were much grieved, and they asked me, knowing Abyssinia so well, to go out and supplicate your Majesty in their names for their pardon and release. The brother of Bell, who is far away in America, requested me also to beg for mercy in the name of his brother, whom you loved so well.

My wife has come with me, in the hope that you will not refuse her prayers joined to mine.

Thus we have left England, and wish to come to you, O King, to make our supplications at your feet. We have arrived at Massowah, and intend to leave this place immediately. We know not yet what road we shall take; but we shall do our best to reach your Royal presence.

We have brought with us a few choice presents.

By the friendship you always showed to Plowden and Bell, I supplicate you then, O King, to allow me and my wife to come to you in safety, and to pardon and liberate the unfortunate captives; which act of mercy will bring down upon you and your house the blessing of God, and will

secure to you the thanks and friendship of the whole British nation.

(L.S.)

CHARLES T. BEKE.

Written at Massowah,
January 29th, 1866.

Second Letter from Dr. Beke to the Emperor Theodore.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, One God.

This letter comes from the Englishman, Charles Theodore Beke, to His Most Excellent Majesty, Theodore, by the Grace of God, King of the Kings of Ethiopia.

On my arrival at Massowah with my wife more than two months ago, I wrote to you, O King, acquainting you with our desire to come to you, to supplicate for the pardon and release of the unfortunate white captives, who have so long lain under your royal displeasure. With my letter I sent a Petition from the relatives of the captives, on whose behalf we have undertaken our journey to Abyssinia.

We were told that the people of Halai loved your Majesty, and we also heard of the victory which Dedjatj Tekla Georgis had gained over Deras. We therefore thought we might come to Halai without danger. On our arrival I immediately sent a messenger to the Dedjazmatj with a letter, telling him of our wish to reach your Majesty's Court, and asking for an escort. He sent me back a very friendly answer, saying that he would have come here before, had it not been for the cholera, which had unfortunately broken out in his camp; but that he still hoped to come here soon.

We remained some time in peace at Halai, till Tesfaldat, a relative of Gebra Medhin, came with his soldiers, and wanted to take us to Gebra Medhin. But, as the people of Halai would not consent to this, he adjured them by the God of Gobazye and the God of Gebra Medhin, not to let us de-

part, under a penalty of 1000 muskets and 1000 carpets, with as many dollars as there are stones and as much gunpowder as there is dust in Halai. We hear that Gebra Medhin has sent to say this was done without his orders; but we are still his prisoners, being unable to continue our journey without his consent.

Therefore I intreat you, O King of Kings, to send and free us from the power of your enemies, and bring us in safety to your presence, so that we may repeat at your feet our prayer for the pardon of the captives; or, if it be true, as we have just heard, that you have been graciously pleased to liberate them, that we may come and thank you in the names of their relatives and friends.

The presents intended for your Majesty remain at Massowah, till we are able by your assistance to bring them in safety to you.

Lest my former letter with the Petition from the relatives of the captives should not have reached you, I now send a copy of both, concluding in the words of our Lord and Saviour, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

May God preserve your Majesty. Amen.

Written at Halai,
April 3rd, 1866.

(L.S.) CHARLES T. BEKE.

Letter from the Emperor Theodore to Dr. Beke.

(Translation.)

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, One God.

The King of Kings, Teódros (says), may this reach the Englishman, Charles Theodore Beke.

Until thou and thy wife, by the power of God, shall meet me, are you well? I, God be praised, am well.

Be it so*. At what time suits you, come by Matámma.

As regards the persons who were imprisoned, by the power of God, out of friendship for the Queen of England, I have liberated them and given them to Mr. Hormuz Rassam. May this give you pleasure.

Written at Zagye, in the 7358th year since the Creation of the World, and the 1858th year since the Birth of Christ.



Second Letter from the Emperor Theolore to Dr. Beke.

(Original in English.)

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God
From the King of Kings, Theodorus, to Doctor Charles Theodore Beke.

How are you? Thank God, we are quite well.

We have received your letter of the 3rd of April. We are sorry for what has befallen you at Hallai. Why did you go up there, when you knew there were disturbances in the country, without first asking us permission?

I have ordered the Chiefs in that neighbourhood to send you back to Massowah in safety; and if any accident happen to you,

* *Eshi*, in Amharic, is the general expression of assent to or compliance with a request. I asked the Emperor for permission to come to him: he answers "*Eshi*."

I shall hold them responsible, and I shall punish them according to their deserts.

I have already answered your first letter by Mr. Flad, and in my reply directed you to come viâ Matamma; but now on your return to Massowah, you are to remain there until I shall inform you what route you are to take. The prisoners, from whose families you brought a petition, I have released for the sake of my friend the Queen, and have made them over to Mr. Rassam, to take out with him when he leaves Abyssinia.

Dated at Zagay, on the 20th day of the month Ginbot, in the year of Saint Mark, 1858, corresponding with the 28th day of May, 1866.

(L.S.)

Reply from Dr. Beke to the Emperor Theodore's two Letters.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, One God.

May this letter reach the King of Kings, Teódro. It comes from the Englishman, Charles Theodore Beke.

May the Redeemer of the World give your Majesty health and prosperity.

I received in due time your Majesty's letter by Mr. Martin Flad, inviting me and my wife to come to you by the way of Matámma. I have since received your Majesty's second letter, desiring us to await at Massowah your orders as to the way we should take.

Ere this you will have heard of the illness of my wife and myself, which would not let us stay at Massowah. Having received intelligence of the liberation of the European prisoners, we have returned to our native country, where we hope to be favoured with your Majesty's further commands.

The presents I brought from the relatives of the captives, I shall send to your Majesty by Mr. Martin Flad.

I myself and my wife rejoice that your Majesty has graciously freed the captives from their chains; and we unite with their relatives, who long to see once more their dear friends, in the prayer that your Majesty will soon perform your promise to send them home.

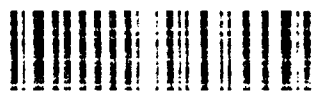
Written at Bekesbourne, in England, on the 14th of September, 1866, corresponding with the 5th of Maskarrem, in the year of St. Luke, 1859.

(L.S.)

CHARLES T. BEKE.

THE END.





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