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WANDERINGS

AMONG THE

FALASHAS IN ABYSSINIA;

TOGETHER WITH

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS VARIOUS INHABITANTS.

Illustrated by a Map and Twenty Engravings

OF SCENES AND PERSONS, TAKEN ON THE SPOT.

BY THE

REV. HENRY A. STERN.

LONDON:

WERTHEIM, MACINTOSH, AND HUNT,

24, PATERNOSTER-ROW,

AND 23, HOLLES-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

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PREFACE.

In presenting this little volume to the public, I may truly say that I am actuated by no other motive than a deep solicitude for the spiritual and temporal welfare of a people, whose past history and future destiny are alike calculated to enlist the sympathy both of the Christian and the philanthropist. Situate in the very centre of hordes of untutored Pagans and degraded Mahomedans, Abyssinia seems marked out by its geographical position to become the focus from whence light and knowledge, commerce and civilisation, are yet to radiate over enthralled and benighted Equatorial Africa.

The special object of my visit to that country was the evangelization of that remnant of Israel, known by the name of *Falashas;* but this did not prevent me from coming in continual contact with every other class of people, and what I saw, as well as the impressions made on my mind, I have faithfully written down in the following pages.

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About the *Gallas*, who occupy the extensive plateaux south of *Shoa*, I have carefully abstained from offering any opinion, and that simply because most of the intelligence communicated by Mahomedan pedlars, or deported slaves, is, generally, exaggerated, if not altogether devoid of truth, and also, because on my return to Abyssinia, I anticipate facilities, which before did not exist, for gaining more correct information in reference to those numerous tribes.

The mystery which has hitherto enshrouded the *Falashas*, and made their very existence a matter of doubt and uncertainty to the Jewish historian,* will in some degree be removed by the facts I have here recorded. This result alone would, however, have afforded me little satisfaction with my journey, had it not also been made the means of awakening some interest in behalf of a quarter of a million of souls, who are eminently fitted to exert a potent influence on the corrupt Church of Abyssinia, and, through that Church, on the teeming population of a mighty Continent.

* *Vide* Dr. Jost's "Geshichte der Israeliten," vol. viii. p. 170.

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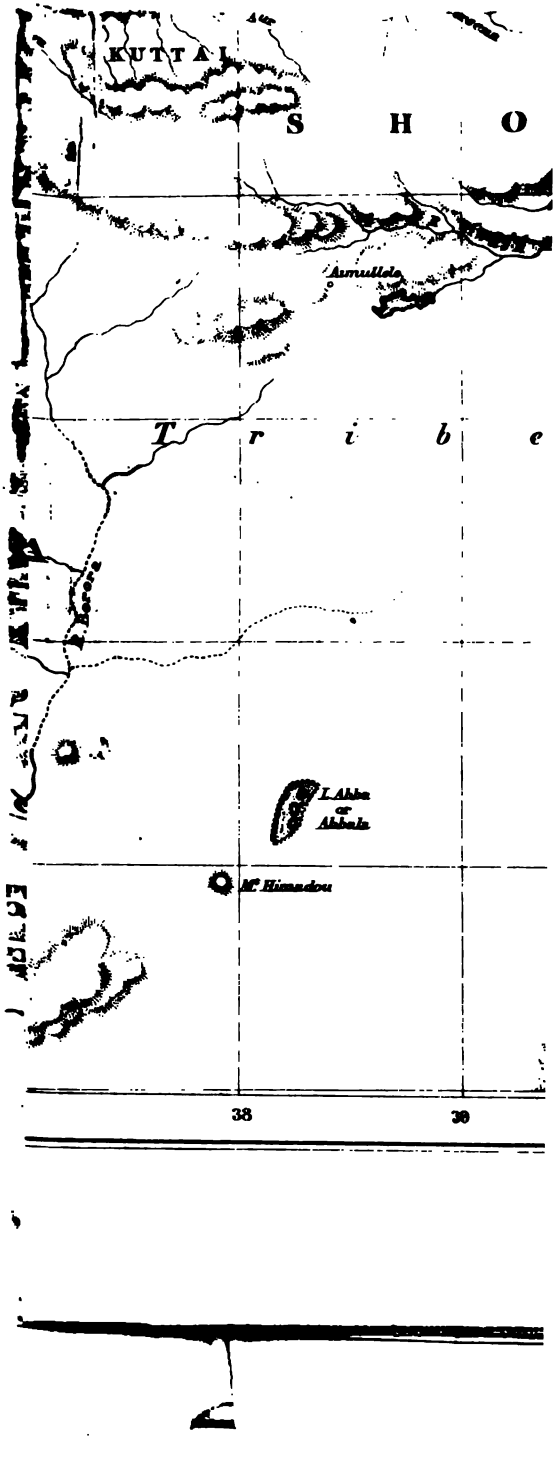
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ABOONA SALAMA, METROPOLITAN OF ETHIOPIA.

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WANDERINGS

AMONG

THE FALASHAS IN ABYSSINIA.

CHAPTER I.

Departure from Cairo—Voyage on the Nile—Carnak and Luxor—Assouan—Korosko—Across the Desert—Brackish Wells—The Sareb—Abou Hamed—Berber—Embarkation—Nubian Scenery—Arrival at Khartum.

It was with a mingled sensation of joy and regret, of hope and fear, that I embarked on board a *dahabia* which lay moored at *Boulak*, the port of Cairo; and, with a sad and lingering look, bade farewell to Egypt and railways—to Egypt and the last vestige of civilized life. Our crew, who, with the exception of the *rais*, were all natives of Nubia, received me and my companion with grins and smiles which, to the surprise of their *baksheesh*-longing cupidity, we returned with liberal interest in the same ephemeral currency. The wind being favourable, the cable was instantly loosed, the lateen sail unfurled, and amidst the usual

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accompaniment of disputes and quarrels, bustle and confusion, our boat swept past the peasant's hut and the Pasha's palace—the pleasure-grounds of the living and the time-defying tombs of the dead—till evening veiled garden and pyramid, hovel and hall, from the admiring gaze. The wind, which increased with the advance of night, propelled our craft at such a rapid rate, that, notwithstanding the varied attractions on the banks of the Nile, we continued our voyage with no other interruption than an occasional brush from a floating stack of straw, or a jerk on the shallow bed of the river. Our sailors, to dispel their drowsy feeling, entertained themselves with stories of *Gins* and *Ghouls*, that might have excited the envy of the inventive *Scheherazadee*. *Omar*, a stalwart athletic black, whose dark and fiery eyes, as he sat cross-legged on the deck, shone like two coals gleaming out of a heap of expiring embers, particularly excelled in this wonderful art. His audience, rapt in the deepest attention, when he came to a grand climax evinced their interest by exclaiming, "There is no might or power, except in Allah the exalted and good." I do not know how long the story-teller spoke, and his friends listened. I experienced a kind of weariness creeping over me, and, whilst my thoughts were still with the *dramatis personæ* who had engaged our sympathy, a spirit of forgetfulness overwhelmed my senses, and *Solyman* and his ring, as well as Mohammed and his horse *Barek*, were both shut out from my mind by a sound and welcome sleep.

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After a pleasant sail of more than a week we reached *Carnak* and *Luxor*, where we spent four days amongst ruins and tombs, which have been so often described that I need not plunge into the secrets of hieroglyphic mysteries, or linger in the rifled chambers of proud royalty's last resting-place. The *rais*, and crew of the boat, shared in our stoic indifference to the fallen grandeur and gloomy desolation of *Thebes;* and without a single sigh or a parting glance of sorrow, we took our departure from a spot where vanity and ambition have traced their awful characters on the wreck and ruins of a city, which, to the very verge of time, may well elicit the wonder and admiration of every visitor.

From royal *Thebes* to *Assouan* (the *Syene* of Ezekiel xxix. 10), we passed, in uninterrupted succession, cities and temples that once rang with the hum of busy and gay multitudes, but where now no sound breaks upon the ear, except the discordant cry of the jackal, or the plaintive ditty of the weary camel-driver.

Anxious to hasten on we immediately, on reaching the first cataract, secured camels; and on the following day, before the sun had sunk behind the rocks and granite cliffs, which form the natural boundary between ancient Egypt and Ethiopia, we were again spreading our sails to the gentle breeze, and drifting slowly up the sacred river till December the 14th, when we exchanged the boat for the camel, and the muddy Nile for the sandy desert. Our original intention was to go to *Wady Halfa*, a few miles south of the cataracts which here impede the

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navigation up to *Berber*, and from thence by land to *Dongola;* but as that journey would have occupied us far more time than the route from *Korosko*, across the dreaded *Bahr Atmur*, we chose, regardless of its dangers and trusting in the protection of our God, the more fatiguing and trying, though the shorter and more expeditious journey.

Sheikh Achmed el Khalifa, one of the chiefs responsible for the safety of goods and travellers across the desert, was then at *Korosko;* and as I had letters of recommendation to him, Mr. Bronkhorst and myself, on disembarking, repaired to his dwelling. Together with his brother and some subordinates, he was seated on a carpet under the shadow of the court wall, smoking and sipping coffee. We squatted down near these magnates of the sandy wilds, and after a few unmeaning complimentary phrases, and a heap of commonplace inquiries, we broached the object of our visit, and requested to be furnished, as soon as practicable, with a sufficient number of camels for our journey. The worthy chief at once promised to attend to this matter; and after a few other arrangements about the hire of animals, and the weight they would be able to carry, we took leave and returned to our tent.

The following day the owners of the camels made their appearance, and began to inspect our cargo. Confident that we were strangers, and unacquainted with the regulations, they began to grumble at the size of one box and the weight of another. At first we were quiet; but as patience is not very elastic in an

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atmosphere where the thermometer rises above a hundred in the shade, we at last silenced their garrulous tongues by acquainting them with the agreement we had concluded with the *Sheikh*, and the injury their bluster and talk would inflict on their reputation for honesty, and their prospect of a *baksheesh*. The last word had a talismanic effect; for it was scarcely uttered when all instantly assented to our proposition, and promised, with the help of *Allah*, to make the journey a perfect pleasure trip (of course it was understood) if sand, heat, and bad water would allow it.

The same evening our water-skins were filled, our packages securely bound with strong ropes, and every other preparation completed for our march across the dreaded desert, which, till within the last few years, on account of its many dangers, was under an interdict from the Egyptian Government, and would probably still enjoy its undisturbed solitude, had not some European merchants who trade with *Soudan* succeeded, through the influence of their respective Consuls, in having it opened for the more expeditious transport of their various articles of commerce.

Our caravan, which consisted of about two hundred camels, met together, more for the sake of company than for mutual protection, at a place called *El Bab*, six hours' distance from the banks of the Nile. Here all our fellow-travellers were already encamped, and it was quite a cheerful sight to see in the boundless desert so many blazing bivouac fires, and to hear in

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the otherwise tenantless waste the hum of so much active and busy talk.

During the summer months the caravans, in their passage across this sun-blighted tract, march from eighteen to twenty hours per day; but, when the heat is less intense and violent, the evening terminates the journey, and the camp is not broken up again till the scantily-clad camel-owners feel their chilled frames warmed and their cold blood heated by the fierce rays of a scorching and merciless sun.

On the fifth day we reached *Murad*, the only spot in this arid and blighted desert where there are a few brackish wells, which contain a sufficient quantity of water to prevent the various caravans that travel along this route from perishing with thirst. We were fortunate in passing just after the rainy season, when the wells are tolerably full, and the muddy, turbid liquid may yet be gulped down without a shudder or paling lip; but when I returned from Abyssinia, after a very dry summer, the water of the *Murad* was so unpalatable to the taste, and so deleterious to the system, that I believe the unfiltered draught of the Thames in the month of August would have been like the nectar of the gods compared to this loathsome and disgusting drink.

Our empty *gerbehs* being again replenished, and the thirst of our camels allayed, we quitted at a very early hour these stagnant wells, and in a solemn and serious mood, which the prospect of a very wearisome day was not calculated to dissipate, trudged in separate files over the sand-covered, pathless waste. There

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is something gratifying to the mind, and cheering to the heart in the midst of the keen toils of a desert journey, where you have continually to struggle with dangers and fatigues, hardships and privations, which those who live in the busy hive of large cities, or move about in the garlanded and festooned circles of fashion, cannot possibly appreciate; in fact, the very idea that your life is bound up with the filthy water-skins strung on the back of the camel you bestride, or linked to the heap of stones carelessly strewn as waymarks along the path you pursue, tends not only to brace the nerves and to fortify the soul, but also to strengthen the belief and to deepen the conviction that there is a gracious Being watching over you, whose presence fills every void, and whose goodness guards your every step.

The tantalizing *sareb*, or mirage, which had mocked our sight ever since we entered this arid domain of sand and calcined rocks, increased with the power of the sun and the refraction of his rays. This treacherous phenomenon, as if it delighted to irritate and to vex the wayworn pilgrim, now deludes his eye with a regular succession of beautiful lakes and shady avenues, and then again with an expanse of waving grass around a picturesque villa; here is presented a grove of towering trees, there a flock of browsing cattle: in fact, the deception is so perfect, that the traveller will not believe that the beautiful scene on which the eye longingly lingers is not real, till his camel actually treads in the saltpetre-encrusted soil and dissipates the optical illusion. On the eleventh day

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we reached—minus a good number of camels, which perished from exhaustion—*Abou Hamed*, where we again beheld the towering palm, and drank of the refreshing Nile. This miserable village, which is on three sides surrounded by mountains of sand, boasts of about twenty huts, and a proportionate number of inhabitants, whose sole occupation seems to consist in drinking *meressa*, in fetching the loads left in the desert, and in mending and filling the *gerbehs* of the travellers. We remained among these squalid and uncouth specimens of humanity thirty-six hours, and then, perched again on the backs of our patient animals, pushed on to *Berber*, which we reached on January the 5th, 1860, having spent nineteen days in accomplishing this formidable and trying journey.

On our arrival at this port we did not search for a house, but unloaded on the banks of the river, amidst heaps of dust, mountains of millet, and crowds of men and women of all shades and colours, from the dirty black of the cinder, to the shining bronze of the statue. We had no desire to protract our stay in the glaring sunshine, blinding dust, and deafening noise; and therefore, without delay, engaged the services of the *Sheikh-el-Bahr*, or river authority, and in a few minutes a boat, something in the shape of an English lighter—only not so well built or so watertight—was offered to us for hire. My Arabic, which was a guarantee against imposition, facilitated the conclusion of the bargain, and in less than twenty-four hours we had forgotten the *Atmur*, the camel, the mirage, and all the other imaginary attractions of the

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desert; and, impelled by a cool and strong north wind, were floating past islands abounding in a luxuriant vegetation, and banks lined with the acacia, *doum*, and palm, beneath whose inviting shade the bean and melon, the onion and garlic, grew in happy seclusion. There was something pleasing and charming wherever the eye gazed, after the desert monotony, except in man, who, like the shoals of crocodiles by which he is surrounded, looked savage, lazy, and repulsive. On the 18th we landed at *Khartum*, a large and important town, situate two miles beyond the conflux of the White and Blue Rivers; and, like *Sanaar*, which it has eclipsed, is notorious for the laxity of its morals, and the fatality of its malarious fevers.

I had letters for the British agent, *Khaleel-el-Shamee*, and also a Viceregal *Firman* and official letter from his Highness, *Said Pasha*, for the *Mudeer*, or Governor of *Sanaar* and *Soudan*; but, as this dignitary was absent from town, my official documents were of little value. There being no *khan*, or hospice, in this remote place, every traveller is compelled to depend for shelter and refuge on the kindness of friends, and the generosity of the charitable. I followed the good example of the *Khowadgee*, or trader; and, accompanied by an ebony-coloured Nubian, wandered through dusty lanes, and sandy streets, towards the house of H. B. M.'s acting agent.

The advent of a European traveller in *Soudan* being a matter of no trifling import and significance, conjecture was immediately rife about the unknown strangers; and, since no one but a merchant or

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trafficking Consul was likely to visit such a remote place, the cunning shopkeeper and calculating trader already trembled lest the influx of fresh goods should glut the market, and diminish their wonted profits. *Khaleel-el-Shamee* did not share the universal panic; on the contrary, he was delighted with the visit of travellers over whom he could extend the ægis of his office, and the wand of his authority. To provide a lodging for his welcome guests was, however, a serious matter, as his own house was crowded with merchandise from Manchester and *Kordoufan*, from the banks of the Thames and the malarious plains of the White River. Happily, Dr. Natterer, the Austrian Consul, relieved him in his dilemma by receiving us under the shelter of his roof. Having thus secured lodgings, I again retraced my way through the queer-looking streets and noisy thoroughfares towards the river. A number of dirty and scantily-clad blacks were already upon the ground, longing for the piastres which were to reward their removal of our luggage. The bargain (for without previous agreement, no porter in Asia or Africa can be satisfied) was soon struck, and whilst we and the representative of Britain's power, in a most undignified posture, squatted down on the heaps of rotting offal which adorn the river's edge, our *khamals* seized boxes and bags, and, with grins and smiles that made their ugly faces look still uglier, hurried away to our future residence.

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CHAPTER II.

The Bazaar—Nubian Belles—European Residents—Trade in Ivory—Capture of Slaves—Consular Protest—Mons. Malzac's Conquests — Romish Missions — Failure — Removal — Blue River — Arab Honesty — *Ennui* — Fever — Egyptian Rule—Courtesy of Aoud-el-Kerim—White Ants—Natives of Soudan —Rough Road—Ague—Kedaref—Michel the Copt.

And now being once more, for a limited period, installed in comfortable quarters within four walls, we exchange our soiled, unwashed Oriental travelling gear for that most shapeless decoration of the human frame—the hybrid garb of the Soudan Turk, and sally forth to admire the various attractions of the capital of *Soudan*. The bazaar, which in *Khartum*, as in Constantinople and Cairo, constitutes the rendezvous of the merchant and shopkeeper, the idle and busy, was the spot which naturally attracted our curiosity. It was now towards noon, when the vendors of milk, bread, fish, poultry, onions, and garlic, brought their inviting delicacies to the market; and never did I, in all my peregrinations, jostle through such a crowd of semi-naked savages, and breathe such an unclean aroma, as in that strange emporium of African trade. In the motley crowd were to be seen the haughty Turk, the grave Arab, the grinning, thick-lipped negro, the melancholy Galla, and the garrulous representatives of countless tribes

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of Bedouins, from the shores of the Red Sea to the deserts of *Darfour*, and as the majority of this mixed multitude had the greatest contempt for dress, and a passionate fondness for rancid grease, which ran in stagnant and blistering streams down their matted and bushy hair, till every one glistened and sparkled like a lump of melting tallow, the *tout ensemble* presented a most savage and repulsive scene. Some of the women in that animated and boisterous bazaar, had really most pleasing, mild, and interesting features. Unlike the custom in other Mohammedan countries, the dark *belle* of *Nubia* and *Soudan* enjoys unbounded liberty; neither a veil, nor the white folds of a cumbrous sheet conceal her soft, lustrous eyes, or impede the elasticity of her graceful step, as she walks along the banks of the river, or brings the produce of the farm to market. If above twelve or thirteen years of age, she wears a long piece of calico, partly around the loins and partly over the shoulder; and if under that age, a mere cincture of tasselled leather is all that encumbers the slender waist and elegant figure. The chief attention of Ethiopia's sallow and copper-coloured maidens is, however, bestowed on the adornment of the head, and in this matter they are as much swayed by fashion as the most fastidious beauty in the Quartier St. Germain, or in the stately saloons of Belgravia. Happily, their fashions are not subject to the caprice of a *modiste*, or the inventive power of a distinguished beauty. The palace at *Karnak*, and the tombs of the Theban monarchs, as in times of old so also in the

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present day, furnish the approved and orthodox models for the most ambitious *friser*. Pride has, however, in all countries to pay a penalty for its indulgence. Thus, in Africa, where curl-papers have not yet been introduced, the woman whose hair has undergone the tedious process of plaiting, must also, during the night, have it protected from becoming dishevelled; and as this cannot so easily be done in a country where a bullock's hide or a mat form the bed, necessity has contrived a bowl-shaped stool  in which the neck is wedged, and on this  substitute for a pillow the vain maiden sleeps in an immovable and most uncomfortable posture during the tedious hours of the long tropical night. In Abyssinia, where the women are particularly proud of their copper-coloured charms, very few, even on a journey and with fifty pounds weight on their backs, will forget to take the wooden pillow and the hollow grease-filled gourd. But besides this, some of the fair sex throughout *Nubia* and *Soudan* endeavour to heighten their charms by imparting a blue dye to their hands, feet, lips, and forehead; and this tattooed appearance, which makes her look perfectly hideous, the tawny-visaged beau considers a great addition to the attractions of his *inamorata*.

The heat, noise, and pestilential exhalations from the drains, putrid fish, rancid grease, rotten vegetables, and filthy natives made me anxious to leave a scene where every object was repulsive to the sight, and every odour offensive to the olfactory nerves.

The following day most of the European residents,

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who here constitute a little colony of about fifteen individuals, visited us. Two or three of these are in the service of the Egyptian Government; but the rest are traders, and hunters of the elephant along the banks of the White River, where they also spend the greater part of the year. The ivory trade, which, a score of years ago, was a most lucrative speculation, has of late become a very hazardous business; and I have been assured by natives, as well as Europeans, that most persons, and especially the Mohammedans, who embark in this dangerous and expensive traffic, make it remunerative by combining with it an extensive barter in slaves. Frequently an armed crew of a boat, in sailing up the river, espy a settlement of negroes, and before these unsuspecting dwellers in the jungle are aware of the marauders' approach, they are hemmed in by a set of inhuman wretches, who, prompted by a love of rapine and plunder, not unmingled with a fanatical zeal for religion, eagerly rush upon these unhappy beings, and before they can seize their defensive weapons, the encampment is on fire, and half its occupants at the mercy of the fiendish captors. Occasionally the blacks, goaded to desperation, lie in ambush for their cruel foes; and no sooner do these, confident in their arms, touch the land, than they are pierced by scores of poisoned arrows, or transfixed by many a quivering spear.

The Government, notwithstanding treaties with European Powers, not only connives at this infamous traffic, but encourages it by sending extensive orders for strong sinewy blacks to fill up the thinning ranks

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of the army. Dr. Natterer, the energetic Austrian Consul, has repeatedly protested against this official infringement of established contracts; but his temerity hitherto only involved him in serious troubles with the Governor of Soudan; and for a considerable time he even dared not venture into the streets without a loaded revolver in his pocket.* Even during my stay at *Khartum*, I heard of several convoys, which had secretly been imported into town, and as ninety-two boats were then on their way up the White River, it was generally anticipated that the pretended speculators in ivory would make the negroes pay in default of the elephant.

Mons. Malzac, a Frenchman, who resided occasionally at *Khartum*, some years ago conquered a large and well-populated district, between the fourth and second degrees north of the equator. The miniature monarchy flourished under his mild sway; and already new and more extensive schemes of power and dominion were matured in his mind, when death, to the grief of his sable subjects, put an end to his mortal career, and to all the ambitious projects he sought to achieve.

Mr. Binder, an Austrian, has, by right of purchase, succeeded to this little domain, and if he can make his power protective against the inroads of black as well as white depredators, he may, perhaps, be able

* I obtained the above information, and many other matters connected with the slave-trade, which I have no authority to make public, from Dr. Natterer, who is the most indefatigable opponent of this wicked traffic.

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to bring other tribes under his rule, and thus organize a little state on the White River, which may yet prove a formidable barrier against the nefarious trade in human flesh.

Khartum, besides the European traders, contained also till last year a good number of Romish missionaries for the conversion of the various tribes in Central Africa. The Mission, which is most liberally supported by the Austrian Marien-Verein, commenced its operations on a scale worthy of the enterprise it aimed to achieve. *Khartum* having been selected as the most eligible locality for the establishment of a school, the training of a native agency, and all the other appliances of an efficient Mission, a building was raised, which, although only the sixteenth part of it was completed, yet involved an expense, as I heard from reliable sources, exceeding thirty thousand pounds. Fever and sickness, which an air-tight stone house, an irrigated garden, and a sedentary mode of existence courted and bribed, at last convinced the priests of the injudiciousness of their selection, and when sixteen missionaries in the prime of life had found a grave instead of a sphere of usefulness at *Khartum*, the whole establishment was removed to the *Shelall* opposite the sacred isle of *Philoe*, where the Egyptian Government has granted them a piece of ground for Mission buildings. The premature death of so many devout and zealous men might have found some compensation if the success of the work had corresponded with the life, energy, and means sacri-

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ficed in the prosecution of it; but hitherto, as I have been assured by Roman Catholics at *Khartum*, owing to their preaching too much Mary* and too little Christ, their efforts have literally been in vain, and their strength and money have been spent for naught.

Our stay at *Khartum* having been protracted beyond our original intention, we at last made preparations for our departure to real savagedom; and on the twelfth day after our arrival, embarked on the Blue Nile, and, between islands covered with huge crocodiles, and high banks wooded by umbrella-shaped acacias, sailed along to *Abou Harass*. The wind, after a few hours' languid breathing, subsided into a wearisome calm, and we had the greatest trouble in inducing our lazy crew, who lay coiled upon boxes and spars in the grilling sun, to betake themselves to the towing rope. The following morning we came to *Elfun* (ten minutes from the river), a wretched village abounding with *meressa* houses, and an equally respectable population. The market, which happened to be held on our arrival, prompted the *rais* and his sailors who had a few piastres to spend, to make a halt. Mid-day passed away, afternoon came, the sun softly moved down the horizon, and still none of the crew made their appearance. We began to think that they had deserted us and the boat, when several of them, a little too gay, and exhilarated from the potations they had quaffed, crept on board. The *rais* soon followed,

* Blacks, like all barbarous tribes, regard woman as a being inferior to man.

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but before he could reach the boat he fell on the heated sand, writhing in agonizing contortions. His whole appearance indicated that the inebriating *meressa*, in which he had freely indulged whilst under the influence of ague, must either be expelled or our craft sail without its commander. The latter plan was considered the most feasible, when it occurred to me that, as possibly we might all have to suffer from similar maladies, a few experiments might not be amiss in promoting the skill of our future practice. Our box of medicines which, like the hoarded treasure of the miser we never allowed to be out of our sight, was instantly ransacked, and an emetic, such as an extreme fever case alone could sanction, was poured down the throat of our helpless patient. The result justified the potency of the remedy, and I believe the grateful *rais* and his amazed crew regarded me thenceforward as the greatest physician and the most wonderful *hakeem* that ever ploughed the waters of the Blue Nile.

On the following day, we passed a good number of flocks which were browsing quite unguarded among the trees and bushes along the river's edge. Our sailors, under the pretext of collecting wood, neared the land, and before we could remonstrate with them, they had stolen a sheep, and stowed it safely away. In the evening we moored the boat under a high bank, far from any human habitation, and there, in conformity with the Mohammedan ritual, the stolen sheep was slaughtered and devoured in the name of *Allah*. The religious scruples of these thieves reminded me of

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some Greek pirates, who, a few years ago, seized a schooner in the Ægean Sea, and murdered every soul on board; yet these desperadoes, who did not shrink from perpetrating the greatest crime, would not, I was assured by some of their own countrymen, as it was the season of Lent, touch any of the captured salt beef, although they were subject for many days to the most gnawing and distressing hunger.

Our voyage, owing to a succession of calms and contrary winds, became, at last, so painfully tedious and monotonous, that even the monstrous crocodiles lost their attractions, and the ducks, geese, ibis, and pelicans, which fluttered in myriads on the isles and shallow brink of the water, ceased to excite the least interest or notice.

At some of the villages where we tied up the boat we tried to make short exploratory excursions; but, after half-an-hour's brisk walk over those illimitable wastes which stretch like a heaving and undulating sea far beyond the discoveries of modern geographical knowledge, all onward progress became impossible, and with aching limbs, and a few brace of tough pigeons as the only result of our toil, we again returned to the boat, or dispelled our evening *ennui* close to some hovel in friendly converse with groups of well-disposed natives.

Fever, the unavoidable accompaniment of the *Soudan* climate, notwithstanding every precaution, exhibited its incipient symptoms amongst our party, and poor Cornelius, and an Abyssinian, whom, together with a companion we had picked up at *Khartum*, lay pros-

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trate from this insidious, agonizing malady. I applied the usual remedies, but the alternate exposure to heat by day, and damp by night, neutralized the effect of the medicine. The seventh day after our departure from *Khartum* saw us safe under the cover of our tent at *Abou-Harass*, and never was life on the river more gladly exchanged for a life on land, or the tyranny of a boat for the freedom of the desert, than by the lonely missionaries on the soil of equatorial Africa.

This district, which belongs to the Government of *Soudan*, has the unenviable honour of possessing a *Kashef*, and a number of unpaid irregular troops. The *Kashef*, or sub-governor, who is responsible to the *Mudeer of Khartum*, makes that chief the barometer by which he regulates his own conduct: hence, if that official is an honest man,—a *rara avis* indeed,—the population enjoys a little respite from cruel tyranny and lawless exaction; but if, as usually happens, the reverse is the case, the poor people are subject to oppression the most revolting, and taxation the most exorbitant. Before the conquest of *Mahomet Ali*, the various tribes inhabiting the peninsula between the White and Blue Rivers, although continually engaged in feuds and quarrels, which sometimes involved one or the other in misery and ruin, still enjoyed freedom from the harpies of a rapacious ruler, and a consciousness of independence from the insults of a lawless soldiery; ever since that period, however, the *Sheikhs*, who attain power, expiate this offence, like *Abou Sinn* of the

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Shoukourees, in the citadel at Cairo—and those who continue weak, and so are not worth the expense of a long voyage, pay the penalty of this equally great offence with the loss of their lives, or the seizure of their property. Spoliation, imprisonment, murder, and every other crime, are almost the order of the day in this wretched land, and the traveller can scarcely wonder at the low state of a people who copy the Turk in his treachery, and emulate his example in vice.

On the evening after our arrival I called on *Sheikh Aoud-el-Kerim* (the son of *Abou Sinn*, who is at present under surveillance at Cairo), and requested him to assist me in securing camels for *Kedaref*. The noble chief, who was seated under a mat-covered shed, surrounded by a score of inferior desert patriarchs, welcomed me with that frank and easy air which, in all climes, secures the confidence and wins the esteem far more than all the hollow and meaningless sentences which hypocrisy has introduced to gloss over the real sentiments, of the heart. Coffee and cigars (the gift of some Frank), which a group of happy and contented-looking slaves, in mute silence, handed round to the guests, stimulated thought and enlivened friendly converse to an extraordinary degree. My own errand to Abyssinia,—amongst men who had never seen any other European, except the dealer in ivory or the speculator in gum and ostrich plumes,—excited the greatest curiosity, and elicited many shrewd and sensible remarks. They all expressed their conviction that Christianity would ultimately prevail over

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every existing creed, and, in their utter ignorance of the Gospel, I was astonished to find that they cherished a vague and confused hope, to which oppression may have imparted its colouring, that this new religion would inaugurate an unprecedented era of prosperity and universal happiness. In going away, *Aoud Kerim* again assured me that he would attend to my request, and without much delay provide camels and faithful men to conduct us to *Kedaref*.

Our tent, which we pitched close to the river's edge, during the night suffered an attack, not from hostile Arabs, but from a far more insidious foe—a whole host of voracious and destructive white ants. Our boxes, though strong, could not resist these fearless invaders, and every article in our possession suffered, more or less, from the nocturnal assault. The enemy, once in possession of our premises, could not be dislodged, and we had no alternative except to change our ground, or to decamp altogether.

The *Sheikh*, faithful to his promise, released us from our suspense, by despatching a file of sinewy and stalwart Arabs to pilot us from the river into the desert, and from the moist region of the ant and the palm to the thirsty land of the gum and the mimosa. Our camel-men were all *Shoukourees*,—a tribe formidable in numbers and notorious for their valour.

Since the conquest of *Mahomed Ali*, the bravery, in which they formerly excelled, has been greatly curbed; still, did their *Sheikh* (who is at present a pri-

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soner in Egypt), feel so disposed, he might, with a few strokes of his reed pen, or a word by a trusty messenger, collect a sufficient army of warriors to revenge, in the blood of every Egyptian in Soudan, the ignoble captivity he has to endure.

Our new travelling companions, quite *à l'Arabe*, entered our tent, and in a peremptory tone announced that at noon we should start. Not at all disinclined to obey this summary order, we immediately struck our tent, and under a February sun, whose dazzling brilliancy blistered the face and inflamed the eyes, rode off to the *Rahad*, and fixed our nocturnal abode in a beautiful forest close to some green and stagnant pools, the remains of the last inundation. The report that we were near a party of nomade robbers, who, during the last few weeks, in spite of the *Kashef* and his half-company of insolent *basha bozouks*, had been freely indulging their freebooting propensities, induced us to spend the night alternately in watching and sleeping, in admiring the starry loveliness of the sky, and in hugging the soft grass which wooed to repose. Morning, with all its African terrors of heat and sun, aroused us from an insensibility into which, in spite of banditti, hyenas, and lions, we had been unconsciously lulled; and, with everything complete except a waterskin, which either some wild beast or one of our own people had carried off, we prepared for our departure.

Before we started we formed the acquaintance of some of the indigenous children of the soil, who, like ourselves, thought the thicket and wide-spread-

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ing tree the most agreeable home in Soudan. Our new friends, who evidently preferred a tangled mass of matted hair to the soft folds of a cumbrous turban, and a well-polished and shining skin to a superfluity of clothing, gave us a hearty welcome in their jungle; and, what we equally appreciated, an abundance of fresh, frothy camels' milk for our breakfast. In return for this hospitality we made them a present of tobacco, and I am quite sure that the maligned weed was never welcomed with greater delight, or stuffed between the glittering teeth with more intense zest, than in the wilds near the *Rahad*.

The Arabs in *Soudan*, though indifferent to the pipe, are passionately fond of the quid; even little boys have their tattooed cheeks distended with this favourite narcotic, whose native relish they daintily flavour by the addition of a moiety of white wood ashes.

Warm and glowing was the atmosphere when we set out, and warm and glowing it continued as we journeyed on. For several hours our route extended across an austere, furrowed and broken tract, where the poor camel at every few steps plunged into a hole or lost its balance in an empty ditch. The teasing reminiscences of former abundance only increased the present want, and the eye wandered in vain over the blighted plain to espy a grateful well or a grassy spot. We met on our way a good number of Arabs who were returning to their desert homes from the market of *Matamma*, where they had been making purchases of horses, cows, honey, and wheat.

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They were all wiry and athletic figures, mounted on dromedaries and unsaddled horses, with their dishevelled hair streaming in the breeze, and their robust and muscular busts as low as the waist exposed to the full play of the sun's dazzling rays. Their arms consisted of a long spear, an oval shield of hippopotamus' hide, and a straight double-edged sword, which was fastened on the pommel of the saddle, or hung suspended from a leather strap across the shoulder. On the whole these tenants of the desert, unaffected by the vices which have corrupted the Bedouin in Syria and Lower Egypt, in their appearance, haughty air, accoutrements and dress, realized most graphically the prophetic announcement: "He will be a wild man." Towards the decline of noon we came to a little wood, and, without consulting our grumbling Arabs, coaxed our camels on their knees, and sought shelter in the gloomy thicket.

Towards evening we were off again. The road, which before had been difficult and dangerous on account of the many yawning clefts, now became still more perilous and uncomfortable, owing to the many bushy and thorny trees which, at every few steps, threatened the traveller with the fate of Mohammed's coffin. As evening advanced and the darkness increased in intensity, half-a-dozen of our camels got entangled in the copses into which they had stupidly rushed to pluck some leaves; and before they could be extricated, our boxes came tumbling to the ground, while the camel-drivers

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exhausted their lungs in vile abuse. Half of our loads being already on the ground the rest soon followed; so, our camels having selected the camping ground, we yielded to their good taste, and around a blazing fire rearranged our luggage, and bedless and coverless fell asleep on the hard and clodded soil. Long before daylight we were again mounted on our submissive quadrupeds, wending our doleful path between gum, doum, and the wide-spreading acacia towards the river *Rahad*, where we intended to take in a supply of water to last us till we reached *Kedaref*, a distance of three days' journey. I had hitherto, considering the toil and fatigue to which we were incessantly exposed, enjoyed tolerably good health; and, by practising a little caution and abstinence I anticipated a continuance of the same blessing till we got into the mountains of Abyssinia; that very morning, however, I felt such a depression and weariness of body and spirit, that, notwithstanding our want of provisions, I could not muster sufficient energy to level my gun at the flocks of pigeons and guinea-fowl which cackled and cooed as if they were unconscious of fear, and an exception to the coyness of their species.

At mid-day we again approached the putrid waters of the exhausted Rahad, and alighted in a wood close to its banks, where groups of uncouth-looking Arabs sat feasting round a camel that had broken its legs. Several of our party, who were in the excruciating agonies of ague, immediately threw themselves on the bare ground, which, instead of

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diminishing, only enhanced the cold shiver, and intensified the quivering sensation, of their fevered frame. I immediately hastened to unpack the medicine chest, and with emetics and copious doses of ipecacuanha, sought to arrest the sufferings of my companions as well as my own incipient symptoms of a disease, which I knew to be frequently malignant in its character and fatal in its effects.

Emetics and hot water were, however, alike unavailing; and, unconscious of all around, and in a kind of delirious stupor, I sustained for about four hours the prostrating paroxysms of cold and heat, which on the return of sensibility left me so weak, depressed, and suffering, that, in the language of another missionary, I longed "to depart and be with Christ."

To protract our stay in that malarious jungle, haunted by the lion, and the no less violent and untamed roving Arab, was more dangerous than to proceed on our journey; and we had, therefore, no alternative but to be resigned to the misery which we could not avert, and the distracting agonies which we could not alleviate. Poor Cornelius, who was chattering as if chilled by a Siberian frost, enlisted the liveliest interest of our camel-drivers, and they all fully anticipated that death would soon terminate his sufferings, and, according to *Soudan* custom, enrich them with his scanty wardrobe. Our journey in the evening and morning was still endurable, but when the fiery rays of a vertical sun began to stream down upon us our agony was so intense that, compared

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to it, the torture of a treadmill would have been a delicious relaxation. At mid-day we usually alighted in the shade of the granite rocks, which at various intervals like watchtowers dotted the plain, or under a tree which marked the spot where a previous encampment had interred its dead. On the eve of the sixth day we made our resting-place on a grassy plain near *Kedaref*, close to several shallow wells whose brackish liquid afforded our parched and blistered lips ineffable draughts. Early in the morning (as I dreaded another attack of ague), to the annoyance of half-a-dozen ostriches who were quietly pecking their morning repast in the shrubs and herbage around, I mounted, and, accompanied by my sick Arab lad and the owner of two camels, hastened to *Suk Abou Sin*, a locality which derives its name from being the principal mart between the *Atbara* and *Rahad*, *Galabat* and *Khartum*. In conformity with the unrestrained etiquette of *Soudan* I rode straight to the enclosure, in which stood the huts of Michel, a Copt, the only Christian in this district. Here, contrary to the inclination of his attendants, who, judging from my ragged garb and meagre sallow looks, were disposed to question my respectability, I was compelled to force an entrance within the thorny fence. Little Michel, swathed and swaddled in unbleached calico and rainbow-coloured cotton shawls, looked the very type of all African diseases. I sympathetically inquired whether I could offer him any medicine, and to my surprise and disgust he requested me to bandage his arm which two days before had been

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splintered by coming into too serious collision with the hard skull of a negro. The black fellow, who stood close by, so grinned and distorted his ebony countenance whilst his unfeeling taskmaster narrated his mishap, that, in spite of my own ills, I could scarcely retain a becoming gravity. I promised to render him all the assistance in my power, and then stretched myself on an *angareb*, where, for above two hours, I endured the cold of an iceberg in a place where the thermometer was above 110 degrees in the shade.

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CHAPTER III.

Kedaref — Matrimonial Edict — Cure of Fever — Obstinate Camel—Close to a Boa—Doka—Intercourse with Sheikhs—Beautiful Scenery — Savage Inhabitants — Matamma — Sheikh's Rudeness—Change—Evening Chat—Levée of the Sheikh—Novel Interment—Uninhabited Country—Wochnee —Forcible Detention—Picturesque Landscape—Hospice in the Forest—Tschelga—Conspicuous Encampment—Religion of the Kamants.

Kedaref, which unites in itself the repulsive vices of Mohammedanism, with all the revolting pollutions of Paganism, was, at the time of our arrival, in a state of the greatest consternation in consequence of an edict from the *Cadi*, in which this administrator of the Moslem code enjoined that all girls above nine, and all boys above thirteen should, under a severe corporeal and pecuniary penalty, within a fortnight remove the scandal which the district had contracted, by forming at once lawful alliances. The object of this wise expounder of the Koran, it was well known, had more to do with the piastres than the virtue and reformation of the people; still, as no one in that lawless country dared to impugn the authority of a *Cadi*, who had the *Kashef* and his hungry troops at his beck, the hue and cry was soon hushed in the universal merriment of hymeneal festivity. A few of

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the more respectable people who did not wish to be driven—to use a fashionable term—into *mésalliances*, applied to me for protection against this new method of extortion, but neither my health nor the character of the people allowed me to sympathize with them in their plight. This novel mode of taxation proved most successful, and the greedy *Cadi*, who luxuriated in the accumulation of piastres extorted by the multiplicity of marriages and an equal proportion of divorces, was already revolving in his mind some new scheme for enlarging his income, when the report of his extraordinary matrimonial mania reached *Khartum*, and, to the delight of the *Soudanees*, he was removed from office.

Abstinence from almost all food, and eighty grains of quinine during four successive days, subdued the fever, and enabled me to leave that lazar-house of vice, depravity, and crime. We started at noon, and proceeded in a south-easterly direction over an undulating country towards the village *Assar;* where, in the house of a Copt, we found a comfortable and hospitable night's refuge. From hence to *Doka* our route was diversified by forests and thickets, abrupt rising mounds, and fantastically shaped basalt rocks. Deer, guinea-fowl, and doves, abounded everywhere; but we had such an aversion to animal food, that we gladly preferred the coffee-pot to the flesh-pot; and a thin piece of tough bread to the most inviting venison.

Near *Doka* I had one of those narrow escapes from a serious accident, which on that, as on many former occasions, clearly indicated that a gracious Providence

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was watching over the safety, and directing the steps of the missionary, through the wild and dreary jungles of Africa. It was just about noon, the time which we usually devoted to rest, when one of our camels, with the wonted obstinacy and stupidity which these brutes occasionally manifest, rushed with two large boxes slung across its back into a dense thicket. A huge branch intercepted its progress, and brought cases and camel down into the shrubs and grass which grew around the gnarled tree. My own vicious animal in a spirit of emulation bolted after its leader, and in spite of all my efforts to check its impetuosity by tightening the rope round its muzzle, the unruly beast dashed through creepers and bushes till, at the heel of its companion, a jerk hurled me and the luggage down upon the prickly copse. Several of our people instantly hastened to my rescue, and to their horror, they discovered close to my bleeding hands and face an affrighted boa, which for an instant glistened in the refracted rays and then disappeared. They all now thought that I must enjoy the special favour of Heaven, and whilst I was grateful to a gracious God for the miraculous escape from a dreadful fate, our Arabs abused their camels in a strain of unique epithets, in which the word Yehudi—though no one of them, I am certain, had ever seen a Jew—was, as the concrete of everything revolting, emphatically applied.

Evening brought us to *Doka*, a gloomy, wild-looking spot, where a few straggling huts stood concealed from the traveller's intrusion, amongst ravines and hills which here diversify the landscape. *Ali Kashef*,

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the Governor of the district, who, together with *Muallem Saad*, a Copt Government's *employé*, had selected this place on account of its salubrity and tolerable water for a home during the dry season, received us with a cordiality as unexpected as it was welcome. The hall of justice, a square rough building, constructed of the slender stems of the beautiful leban, or incense tree, lashed together by a numberless variety of leafy creepers, and covered with straw and brushwood, was at once assigned to us for our abode. There were to this airy tenement two doorless wide entrances from opposite ends, which at first made me a little doubtful about our safety; but, on reflection, I felt confident that our host would not expose his guests to a nocturnal attack of robbers or wild beasts, and so, committing myself and party to the guardian care of Him whose presence is not confined to time or place, I fell into a most pleasant and agreeable slumber, from which I did not awake till dawn the following morning.

With sunrise various chiefs from the *Atbara* and the deserts bounded by the highlands of Abyssinia came, either to settle accounts or to dilate on marauding expeditions. Our unexpected presence excited some dismal forebodings in the throbbing heart of a *Sheikh* or two, who, conscious of their enormities and crimes, thought they recognised in us the spies of the Egyptian Government, and heralds of their impending doom. Our numerous boxes, and the exhibition of several Arabic Bibles, however, convinced them of the peaceable character of our mission; and

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I was assured by one and another chief that, if I passed through their territory, both they and their people would be my obedient slaves. *Muallem Saad*, a most kind, amiable, and thoroughly good man, a wonderful rarity among the degraded and unprincipled Copts, related to the assembled desert magnates what I had told him about Missions, and the wonderful changes they had effected in refining the corrupt nature, in ennobling the depraved heart, and in instructing the benighted mind of men, who once possessed not the slightest knowledge of God or heaven. They thought that this was a most meritorious work, and in tones of evident sincerity, they all offered me their spears and trusty warriors if I would go and convert their neighbours the *Shankgallas*. I told them that a religion which is true and divine must convince the mind and win the heart, without the use of violence or force, and that this method of propagating the doctrines of the *Angeel* had been enjoined by Christ and practised by his followers. "Our prophet," said the old scribe of the *Kashef*, "has not adopted the example of 'Nebi Isau' and this is the reason that Islamism despatches more hypocrites to hell than true Moslems to heaven."

Our short stay at *Doka*, where we were most hospitably entertained, and enjoyed the luxury of good air and an abundance of drinkable water, quite renovated our exhausted frames; and with fresh vigour and energy we again tied the halter around the muzzles of our camels and resumed betimes in the morning our march through forests and dense jungles

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towards *Galabat*, or, as it is called by the Abyssinians, *Matamma*. Three hours' ride brought us to *Dagleish*, where the violence of the heat compelled us to seek refuge from the noontide sun in a hut, which charity has taught the natives to attach to every settlement, for the accommodation of the wearied and exhausted wayfarer. The floor of this hospice, which numerous nests of ants had furrowed and raised for their own domicile, did not offer a very safe retreat; but the Sheikh, accompanied by a detachment of his harem, brought angarebs* and large bundles of rushes; and these few articles of African furniture soon diffused an air of comfort and cleanliness around our temporary shelter.

Past noon we mounted again. Our path, which lay between forests of incense, tamarind, and sycamore trees at every opening, unfolded to us the varied prospect of fields and plains, upland glades on which the shepherd tended his flock, and round hills on which some Arabs had reared their huts. This whole region, apparently so rich in natural beauty, and so bountifully provided with nature's most attractive gifts, is surrounded by an atmosphere of death, and inhabited by tribes of marauding and predatory habits. On my return from Abyssinia I passed this same route, and on several spots I saw the mangled

* An angareb is a kind of rude couch, constructed of two side and two cross poles, which are supported on wooden legs and fastened together by thongs of cow-hides; when completed and dried in the sun it forms an airy and comfortable bedstead.

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remains and the clotted gore of the poor victims who had been murdered the night previous by the *Beni Nimmer*, the children of the tiger as they are appropriately styled, who were hovering in the neighbourhood, plundering peaceable villages, and killing every traveller whom business led along that road. We saw several spies watching in the leafy branches of the trees, but the cheery songs of my escort, the rapid fire of my revolver, and the report of my being a friend of King Theodoros, whose liege subjects these freebooters claim to be, kept the Tiger and his followers at bay, and secured me a safe passage through that blood-stained territory.

A cool and refreshing breeze, which sprang up at sunset, induced us to continue our march. Our camel-owners readily seconded our wish, and, till night closed in upon us, our progress was satisfactory to all; but now, as the darkness became more intense, and the tortuous path lined with prickly shrubs and thorny trees, grew narrower, we were obliged, out of regard to our clothing and skin, to put a stop to our day's journey. The next day, at noon, wearied and fatigued, we reached *Matamma*, the last village on the Abyssinian frontier. Here we thought our hardships and toils would, if not terminate, be at least mitigated; but, to our surprise we found the *Sheikh* rude and sulky, and all his wild *Tougrouree* subjects in arms, and excited to the highest pitch of frenzy. Upon inquiry we discovered that the panic which had turned the heads of old and young, women and children, was caused

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by the dread of a *Tigrean* invasion to avenge the death of three hundred countrymen and co-religionists, who a fortnight before in an attempt to plunder the market, had fallen into an ambush, and were mercilessly slaughtered by their watchful enemies.

The *Sheikh*, an inveterate drunkard, to whom we announced our arrival, and preferred a request for a hut to shelter us from the blazing sun and the herds of savage hyenas which prowl about the place, returned us for an answer, that we might live under the trees, and if that was not good enough, we might go and be killed on the road to *Wochnee*.

Not at all repulsed by this inhospitable message, I despatched our Arab servant, armed with my firman, an epistle from the Viceroy of Egypt, and other official documents; and, in less time than sufficed to sip a cup of coffee in the hut of a friendly native, the formidable papers, which, I believe, no one could read, secured us a place of refuge, and an official visit from the wild chief and a troop of his suspicious looking savage warriors.

In the evening the Sheikh sent us his secretary, astrologer and fakeer, or chaplain, who made all sorts of inquiries about our journey, and the object we sought to achieve. They all pretended to be strict Mahomedans, but their conversation convinced me that they had only been inoculated with the gross vices of Islamism, whilst in practice they still adhered to the vagaries and idle superstitions of their Pagan neighbours. They were particularly interested in the

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subject of slavery, and thought it very silly that we should pay wages to servants when for that money we could purchase the handsomest *Galla* in the market. Several other persons subsequently joined us, and as they began to indulge in hydromel, meressa, and all the boisterous concomitants which characterize the loathsome orgies of barbarians, we quitted the cool and open court for the sultry and suffocating hut.

The second day after our arrival, ambassadors came from *Palambaras Gelmont*, the governor of *Tschelga*, whose rule extends to the *Tougrouree* country, to congratulate the *Sheikh* on his victory over the robber bands, and at the same time also to renew afresh the slender and hypocritical bond of friendship and amity. On hearing this favourable intelligence, I repaired to the Divan to ascertain the truth of the report. The council-chamber, an oblong thatched barn, I found so crowded with subordinate chiefs and their half-naked attendants, that it required considerable physical exertion to force one's way through the agitated mass of closely-packed oleaginous heads and shoulders, towards the dais, or raised seat of the chief. As at our first meeting so also now, the dreaded *Jumma* welcomed me with unwonted civility; and anticipating that I should share in the satisfaction which was legible in the sharp features of his swarthy countenance, he acquainted me with the good tidings he had received from Abyssinia, "and now," continued he, with elated voice, "I will secure you camels, and expedite your departure to the land of the *Kaffirs* (*i.e.* infidels), where your

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books may improve, or perhaps change the creed of those idolaters." Delighted with the prospect of a speedy departure from a place in whose malarious and putrescent atmosphere, vultures, hyenas, and Tougrourees only can exist, I pushed my way back through the steaming groups of greasy natives, and hurried to the market, where, assisted by the Sultan's secretary, as the Sheikh is pompously styled, I engaged camels, and made arrangements for our departure to *Wochnee*.

Previous to starting, the sottish *Jumma*, in a fit of generosity, sent us two large bags of flour, and also several fowls as a present; and, grateful for our deliverance from that horrid place, we hastened away as fast as our patient animals could carry us.

On our way we passed close to the spot where the mangled remains of the cowardly invaders who had here fallen victims to their own rapacity and love of plunder lay exposed to a broiling and burning sun. The sight was most revolting, and, notwithstanding the hardening influence of barbarism, I felt a cold aguish sensation creep over my heart as I heard the shouts of delight bursting from the camel-drivers when an eagle or vulture sailed over our heads holding a blackened limb or a foul piece of human flesh suspended in his beak.

From here to *Wochnee*, the whole surface, occupying about sixty miles, is utterly destitute of all human habitations—of all signs of human life. The lion and tiger, the buffalo and rhinoceros, the elephant and giraffe are the sole occupants of the whole region,

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and the traveller from every overhanging cliff can see the more bulky of these dwellers in the forest leisurely enjoying their noonday siesta on the bank of some stream, or beneath a clump of shady trees. The caravans which for about six months in the year pass and repass this solitary route, invariably travel in large parties to ensure mutual protection against an attack of predatory *Tougrourees*, and the no less dangerous assaults of wild beasts. As our own party was not very strong we marched almost without intermission, by day and night, an effort which, in our exhausted condition, made our limbs ache, and our heads throb with most agonizing pain.

On the second morning we descended through a long range of hills down into a steep, green wilderness; and from thence, between groves of bamboo, ebony, and different species of euphorbia, we rode on to *Wochnee*, which we reached ere the sun had mounted above the horizon. I had heard so much of *Wochnee*, that I expected to see a large village, occupied by an industrious, busy population; but, to my surprise, I found that the grand market of Western Abyssinia's trade is periodically held in the depth of a dense forest, where, even during the driest season, the luxuriant vegetation hemmed in by steep, towering mountain-ranges, exhales from its humid soil a pestilential miasma. A few miserable huts for the accommodation of the grim collectors of the duty, and the distillers of *detch* and *dallah*, were the only habitations visible in this wooded solitude. My companion, who had preceded me with

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letters, in order to prevent any possible detention in the lowlands, I found here in one of these miserable sheds suffering from fever and a *coup-de-soleil.*

The fate of a German, sent out last year by the Bishop of Jerusalem, who here found his grave, as did his son some days later at *Tschelga,* prompted me to expedite our journey up to the highlands; but, to our disappointment, when we were ready to quit that steaming jungle and hotbed of disease, the *Negad Ras,* or chief of the Custom, interdicted our onward movement without the previous sanction of the King or the express order of the governor of the province. We had no inclination to submit to the penance imposed upon us by a sullen official; but as to all our remonstrances, he only reiterated that it was a command of the *Negoos,* and we were obliged to chew the cud of our disappointment in patient resignation. On the fourteenth day, the impatiently-expected order at length arrived, and without any delay we hired donkeys, and, accompanied by a soldier from the *Palambaras* and a chief of the *Kamants,* set out for *Tschelga.*

Our route, which was nearly due east, lay over huge mountains and wooded plains, rugged ravines and frowning rocks, so variegated and picturesque, that, in the beauty of each successive scene, the admiring eye imparted fresh vigour and elasticity to the wearied and exhausted frame. A few isolated rocks, with their flat summits, concealed in white misty clouds, like castellated towers, rose far above this magnificent landscape. The most conspicuous of all, the

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Zar Amba and *Entchet Amba*, are at present used as State prisons, but formerly they were the homes of captive royal princes.

At *Walee Dubba*, a deep valley, enclosed on all sides by lofty ranges of mountains, we stumbled upon formidable arrays of large *dallah* jars, a beer made of sprouting barley, which Christian and *Kamant* women offered to the traveller for sale. It was quite an unexpected surprise to see the solitude of an African wilderness enlivened with the gay song and sprightly converse of a number of young lasses, who, clad in rustling leather petticoats, moved about amongst the various groups resting under the leafy foliage, with a grace and innate modesty which elicited admiration, whilst at the same time it forbad all unbecoming liberty.

Our people having had to carry the boxes on their own shoulders, as the road was very steep and narrow, I ordered for them three *gumbos* of the favourite beverage, but on offering to pay, the soldier, and also several officers of the Custom, who transacted all their business in a gloomy gorge, peremptorily enjoined on the poor women not to accept a single salt from persons who were the guests of the *Palambaras*. Their stern looks and fierce threats terrified the timid creatures, and in accents full of disappointment and fear, they implored us to forget an error, for which they plaintively pleaded poverty as their excuse. We removed all their apprehensions on this score, and to compensate them for the loss they had incurred we gave for each gumbo—instead of a salt—a string

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of glass beads, a liberality which they acknowledged in a copious effusion of unaffected blessings.

On the third day we reached *Tschelga*, a large market-place, surrounded by detached huts and a few isolated juniper groves, distinguished by the towering symbol of the Christian's sanctuary. There being no hospice to receive a stranger except the small huts of the vendors of *detch* and *dallah*, which were not the most inviting abodes, we unpacked our tent, and on a height, conspicuous for many miles, pitched our canvass home.

The report that Franks had arrived soon spread through the market, and the *Cosagi*, the hill we occupied, in a very few hours became the centre of attraction to Jews, Christians, and *Kamants*. The latter sect, who live almost exclusively in the province of *Tschelga*, are, on account of their indifference to the religious prejudices which one superstitious system has copied from the other, very much despised and misrepresented. I questioned a good number about their knowledge of God, and their hopes of eternity; but they had so little to communicate, beyond a belief in a Supreme Being and the existence of a future state, that the most simple query caused them the utmost wonder and surprise. They have some priests, and, at stated times, repair to certain rocks to perform secret acts of devotion; but, on the whole, their system of belief is devoid of every human ingredient and every Divine revelation, of every sensible object of adoration to impress the senses, and every spiritual truth to touch the heart. Their language

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is *Amharic*, but amongst themselves they speak in the Falasha tongue; and the striking Jewish features of many a man and woman amongst them inclined us to credit the report which assigns to them a Jewish origin.

According to Abyssinian tradition, the King of *Tigrē*, soon after his conversion to Christianity, crossed the *Taccazy*, and invaded *Semien* and *Amhara*. Here he met a people who were neither Pagans nor Christians, a marvel which aroused the monarch's curiosity, and he inquired what they believed; to which, in a laconic style, they replied in their own dialect *Kamant*, or *Kam Ant*, *i.e.*, as thou, from whence they obtained their present appellation. They are, as a body, an industrious, energetic, and active race, residing in districts where they have fine pasture for their cattle, and fertile soil to reward their field labour. Many of the women daily come to *Gondar* to sell wood, and, at first, it was a strange sight to see these young females —clad in simple leather petticoats, and equally simple earrings of wood, which, according to the orthodox fashion, must be weighty enough to distend in a few years the flap of the ear down to the shoulders—walking about in the market, or groaning under a heavy burden of wood, utterly unconcerned about everything except the graceful ornament that dangled round their neck.

A few years ago, King Theodoros, in the flush of victory and the ardour of zeal, intended to compel this inoffensive race to accept the Christian faith; but when, in a Grand Council, the plan was proposed,

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several chiefs reminded his Majesty that if that scheme were carried out, the *Kamants* might become proud, and bring no more fuel to *Gondar;* and this being a matter of such very grave importance, the project was at once abandoned, and the poor people were saved by their toil and activity from persecution or the acceptance of a hated and idolatrous creed.



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CHAPTER IV.

Visit to the Palambaras—Extensive View—Judgment Hall—Prompt Justice—Strange Request — Hospitality — Orders from the Royal Camp—*Coal* on the *Quanque*—A Storm—Intelligence—Unguarded Camp—March of Troops—Perverted Taste of the Women—Arrival in the Royal Camp—Audience of the King—Visit from a Great Chief—Passion Week—Military Parade—Royal Interest in Missions.

We had now been five days, at *Tschelga*, and, as we did not know how much longer we might be detained in that place before we obtained the royal permission to take the necessary measures to achieve the object which had prompted our long and toilsome journey, I thought it advisable to visit the Governor of the province, who, as we were informed, stood high in the royal favour. The residence of this chief being in the mountains at the extreme north-west corner of the province of *Tschelga*, a distance of seven hours from our camping ground, I mounted at a very early hour, and, accompanied by three natives, rode over the plain towards the *Amba*, or natural fort of the *Palambaras*. The path was easy, and the north wind, which blew in cool gusts down from the mountains, refreshed the atmosphere and expedited our progress. Towards ten o'clock, after many a tedious and fatiguing scramble

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over almost perpendicular rocks and heights, we emerged through a juniper and euphorbia forest on a plateau, above which, encircled by dizzy abysses, rose the furrowed and frowning *Amba*.

We immediately dismounted, and, emulating the good example of other visitors, shouted to the soldiers and domestics, who were enjoying their siesta behind dislodged rocks, or taking an airing on the edge of fathomless precipices, that they should open the gates. The appearance and complexion of the stranger created quite a sensation, and a whole troop of lazy fellows, with straining eyes and gaping mouths, looked at me across the ravine as if a being from a different planet had suddenly tumbled amongst them. I reiterated my request, and at last one of the savages more courageous than the rest moved out of the line of terrified gazers, to announce my arrival. During this interval, to the amusement of the subordinate governors and their suites, who could not comprehend why a man should walk when he could leisurely squat down and rest, I took a stroll over this upper plain to have a full sight of the matchless scene, on which the eye so delightedly rested. From the altitude on which we stood, we had a range to our vision which must have embraced more than 150 miles in circumference. There, on our left, towards the south-east lay the rich plain of *Dembea*, bounded by the placid waters of the *Tzana*, and the Alpine range of the *Guna*, with its summit 14,670 feet above the level of the sea, clearly defined towards a blue, cloudless horizon; on our right, close on the rear of the *Amba*, in a north-westerly direction, as if arrested in the

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heaving and surging by the fiat of Omnipotence, rose out of an agitated and restless ocean of green foliage, the wave-like mounds and hills of *Armatgioho* intersected by wooded valleys, and dark chasms, whilst on the outskirts of this magnificent region, faintly discernible through the hazy atmosphere, extended beyond the eyes' ken, an unsightly and desolate waste of blight and sterility. My ramble was brought to a close by a messenger whom the *Palambaras* had despatched to conduct me across the narrow path which united the *Amba* with the plateau. Arrived on the opposite side, we passed a low gateway constructed of massive blocks of wood, and then, on the edge of the yawning precipice, which was protected by a parapet of loose stone, we scaled the height of this rampart of nature, and, between rows of ragged servants and lazy soldiers, made our way to the audience-chamber of the Governor of Western Abyssinia.

The building in which all the business of an important province was transacted resembled in appearance a circular hay-stack on a magnified scale. At my entrance, every inch of ground was crowded with officials, visitors, and litigants, who, by being closely packed together, so effectually excluded every ray of light which might have forced its way through the interstices of the wicker framework that, in my endeavours to steer safely through the invisible throng towards the *alga* of the chief, I stumbled over several greasy and slippery figures, and might perhaps have ended my adventurous walk in the dark on the heads of half-a-dozen indig-

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nant and mortified *Shums*, had not the *Palambaras* extended his hand, and drawn me towards a small recess which he occupied. After a few desultory questions of no importance, the Court again resumed its sitting, and plaintiffs and defendants in dozens leaped on their legs to display their forensic skill. The boisterous debates of the passionate litigants did not in the least disturb the calm dignity of the Judge, or deter him from pronouncing a prompt, and, I believe, also correct decision, in the most entangled cases. Now and then a disappointed suitor ventured to express his dissent from the verdict, a presumption which led to his immediate ejection from the Court, and not unfrequently a sound application of the hippopotamus whip to his nude back; whilst, on the contrary, the gainer in the action threw himself on all-fours, and with his drooping forehead on the foul rushes which served for a carpet, gave vent to the overflowing gratitude of his heart in a long string of unmeaning and sham blessings.

The incessant wrangling, close atmosphere, and offensive odours which pervaded this hall of justice made my feverish frame long to breathe again the invigorating breeze I heard sighing among the dry leaves and branches woven in the circular walls of the hut; but the difficulty was how to effect my object without creating confusion, or, what was equally difficult, without bringing my heavy boots in collision with some naked feet and swinging bodies. I signified my in-

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tention to the *Palambaras*, who, instead of conceding to the request, waved his hand to half a score of soldiers, and in an instant, high and low, *shums* and officers, were helter-skelter, with the exception of a priest, who held a brass cross in his hand, ejected from the court.

Being now alone, the worthy chief seized a pair of English double-barreled pistols, which lay charged beneath his pillow, and in a kind of peremptory style requested me to explain to him the manufacture of such beautiful arms. I was about to pour forth my whole stock of knowledge on this subject, when one of my Abyssinian companions, who had been in Syria and Egypt, interrupted me, and, in a strain so confused and bewildering, launched out on steam, telegraphs, and cannons, that I was not at all astonished to see the poor priest making the sign of the cross, and the *Palambaras* himself own that work done by the seething, bubbling, and whirling of water and fire could not be free from the agency of the "*gente a basso.*" I endeavoured to slide the conversation into a more serious groove, and had partly succeeded, when suddenly a procession of half-a-dozen slaves brought in a wicker basket of bread and black fiery sauce, concocted of capsicums, onions, dried peas, and other palatable ingredients. Seven hours' ride and a long fast had given me and my companions an excellent appetite, and a crouching *Galla* had to ply his unwashed hands for a considerable time in the hot paste, in order

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to soften a sufficient quantity of leathery cakes for his master's famished guests. During the repast, the *Palambaras* eyed me very keenly, and on perceiving that, I guessed the import of his gaze, he candidly confessed that his eyes had been riveted on my printed calico shirt, which he thought, as I had an abundance of upper garments, I could well leave him as a memento of our friendship. I readily promised to accede to this request; but instead of divesting myself then and there of this important article of dress, as he anticipated, I postponed to satisfy his cupidity till my return to *Tschelga*. He instantly ordered two servants to accompany me, and, with many iterated asseverations that he would ensure me a favourable reception by the King, which I subsequently learnt was mere brag, I retraced my steps to our lonely camping ground on the *Cosagi*.

Suspense, impatience, and anxiety were already beginning to make our hearts sink, when, quite unexpectedly, a messenger brought us tidings of his Majesty's return from the *Tigré* campaign, and an order that we should, without delay, repair to the royal camp at *Lamgie*, on the eastern shore of the *Tzana*. My companion being too weak and indisposed for a twenty-eight hours' unintermitted ride, I left him in charge of the luggage, and, by the light of myriads of sparkling stars, proceeded with some trusty natives on my doleful journey. The grey dawn was just unveiling the dark ridges of the *Begemeder* mountain-range, when we came to the *Quanque*, the boundary line between *Tschelga* and *Dembea*.

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This river, which has its rise in the hills of *Dagossa*, half an hour's distance west of the *Tzana*, had, when we crossed it, scarcely more than two feet depth of water; but during the rainy season, the numerous torrents which roll into it render it a formidable stream before it debouches into the *Atbara*. Along its banks coal-mines of a very superior quality abound; even those pieces which lay strewn over the ground, and had become calcined by the action of the sun, on being lighted, burned with a fervent heat. Some shepherds, who were tending their flocks on the rich pasture-land of these extensive plains, cheerfully supplied us with an abundance of excellent milk, and, after a brief halt and this substitute for coffee, I leaped again into my clumsy saddle, and rode away.

The weather, which was unusually close and sultry —the wonted indications of an impending storm—induced us to quicken our pace across the meadow-land, towards the hills, where clusters of huts promised us a safe shelter and retreat. Our accelerated speed was however of no avail. The few clouds which ominously hung on the eastern horizon suddenly overspread the whole sky; the thunder began to roll, the lightning to flash, the wind to howl, and the very atmosphere, so calm and serene a little before, became murky, sulphureous, and loud with unearthly tones, as if the very elements of nature were in agony, and the dissolution of the universe at hand. My mule, pelted by the rain and hail which fell in rattling and drenching showers, instinctively rushed towards a cover formed by the sycamore and wild fig,

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or *worka* trees, where, not without danger from the creaking branches and the lurid lightning, I watched anxiously the gradual dispersion of the black clouds and the re-appearance of the obscured sun. The tempest lasted about an hour, and then subsided again as suddenly as it had sprung up; and if the submerged plain and uprooted trees had not impeded our progress, we should soon have forgotten this unpleasant interruption to our onward progress.

The soft wet soil, intersected by many torrents and miniature lakes, proved serious obstacles to our reaching the royal camp on the following morning as we had calculated; and, as if to increase our vexation and misery, the last few hours had caused a bend in our path, which led us round a thicket of brushwood into the very midst of a crouching group of women and soldiers, who, in that wantonly lying spirit of the Abyssinians, deliberately informed us that the King had gone to *Debra Tabor*, a place eighteen hours further east than *Lamgie*.

This intelligence, although we did not believe it, still filled me with some uneasy apprehensions about the issue of the journey, and my meeting with the King. Accustomed to fatigues and inured to toils, I allowed little time to the reflections of my companions, who longed for a few hours' rest and the coveted *dallah* jar in the village we were approaching, but continued to push on till night compelled us to tether our jaded animals near the home of a friendly peasant. Detachments of troops

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from various parts of *Dembea*, where they had been quartered on the inhabitants as a punishment for their suspected sympathy with the rebel *Gerat*, soon joined us; and these noisy savages, with their garrulous wives and servants, kept up a clatter and din that forbade all sleep, and drove us out of the reach of their busy tongues.

We now found the road everywhere dotted with marching or sleeping regiments, who were all on their way to join the royal standard. Close on the *Tzana* we passed through the lines of several thousand horsemen, who, notwithstanding the darkness of the night and the proximity of a rebel chief, left their camp to the guardianship of countless flocks of geese and ducks, whilst they, in utter forgetfulness of all around them, vied with the hippopotami in filling the air with jarring nasal sounds. The echo of our mules' tramp on the hard, stony soil, called forth the howl and yell of many a leopard and hyena; but I believe a park of artillery would not have awakened these pillars and props of Ethiopia's throne.

With the grey dawn we came near the *Arnou Garnou*, two rivers which, after absorbing the mountain torrents of *Emfras*, sluggishly flow through the plain, till, within two hours of the *Tzana*, they mingle their streams ere they are swallowed up by the lake. Governors and feudal chiefs, attended by the retainers of their respective clans in file after file, and line after line, all armed with swords, spears and shields, in uninterrupted succession, now swept down the moun-

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tains and along the reed-edged bay to the rendezvous at *Lamgie*. There was something noble and chivalrous in this martial array of mounted warriors, which would have excited the admiration of any stranger, had not the sight of a prodigious rabble of toil-worn, footsore, and wobegone young girls and women, burdened with heavy loads, and ready to drop from incessant fatigue, marred the interest and diverted the sympathy. The poor things, unconscious of their degradation and misery, voluntarily choose this wretched existence in preference to the healthy lot of the peasant, and a quiet and virtuous life in the mountain-hut.

Myself and servants cautiously endeavoured to avoid being mixed up or lost in the crowd; but as this was almost impossible, we diverged from the road, and in the dried-up bed of a river sought a shelter till the bulk of the army had passed. About ten o'clock we mounted again; and between a labyrinthine confusion of leafy huts and cage-shaped tenements, the previous camping-ground of a division of the royal host, rode on through a tract of country, so variegated in its features by gentle eminences and murmuring brooks, by dark forests, and a calm sea, that the whole landscape bore the aspect of a park laid out on a gigantic scale.

A wide passage between two chains of mountains, brought us in sight of the troops and gaudy tents of King *Theodoros*. With my sweltering companions, and two miserable jaded mules, I plunged into the very centre of the serried ranks of grim

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warriors, who politely suffered us to pass on towards the tent of the late Mr. Bell, an Englishman of high rank in the royal army. Mr. Bell, who was a perfect Abyssinian in appearance and dress, but a gentleman in thought and heart, gave me, what in my peculiar circumstances I doubly appreciated—a reception so cordial and friendly, that I shall ever cherish his memory with sincere affection and regard. The same afternoon he informed the King of my arrival, and His Majesty most urbanely appointed the next day for an audience.

Punctual to the engagement, the King sent for me on the following morning, and, accompanied by Mr. Bell, I repaired to the royal presence. As the weather was cool and refreshing, His Majesty had left the tent, and, surrounded by scores of his nobles, paced up and down on a greensward facing the *Tzana*. On approaching this spot I uncovered my head, and, in a deferential attitude, paused at about fifty yards distance from the royal presence. With the greatest courtesy the King beckoned me to come nearer, a condescension towards a Frankish priest which made many a haughty chief sneer, and then in a tone of the utmost affability, he interrogated me about the various countries I had visited, the character of the people, and the religions they professed. That a Christian nation like the English should tolerate idolatry in India, and uphold the power of Mohammedanism in Egypt and Turkey, he could not understand; and as politics and religion are synonymous terms in Abyssinia, I thought it advisable

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merely to observe that Christianity taught us to love, and not to persecute; to instruct, and not to oppress an unbeliever. "*Avoonat! avoonat!*" ("True! true!") he exclaimed; "and if this is your design in Abyssinia you have my approval to your mission, if you likewise obtain the assent of the *Aboona*." On my craving permission to travel in his realm, in case the Metropolitan countenanced the object which had brought me to Abyssinia, he instantly replied, "I am your brother and friend, and you have my full sanction to visit every province in my kingdom."

On my return from the royal audience, the Governor of the united provinces of *Lasta* and *Bellesa*, a powerful chieftain, paid me a visit in Mr. Bell's tent. This noble chief's father, a few years ago, expiated a traitor's crime by the hangman's hand; but, unnatural as it may seem, the doom of the parent did not in the least affect the allegiance and fealty of the son. He has a regular army of about twenty thousand horsemen under his command, and should any contingency arise, as he told me himself, he could easily in a week or fortnight double this number from the sturdy and fierce mountaineers attached to the family whom he represents. In person he is exceedingly prepossessing; and as a pleasing exterior and daring courage win the heart and dazzle the eye of rude and uneducated men of every country and clime, he is perfectly idolized by his troops, and very much in favour with the King. My own mission interested him exceedingly, and like the King and many other nobles, he lamented the degradation of his country,

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and the sins and vices which pollute the people. He urged me to visit *Lalibella*, the capital of Lasta—a place famous for a church cut out in a solid rock. I fully intended to avail myself of the proffered protection to see this sacred and venerated shrine; but the long tour through the districts inhabited by the Falashas, and the approach of the period for my departure, did not allow me to spend any time in antiquarian researches. During our conversation, several officers claimed their chieftain's attention, but he felt so interested in what Mr. Bell and myself told him about Europe, that even when a royal messenger summoned him to attend a Council, he manifested great reluctance to make his exit.

This being Passion Week, when no animal food is brought into camp, the King, with unwonted consideration for a stranger, sent me a present of an antelope, which had been caught in a thicket by some troops. Maggerer, a French soldier, whom a variety of adventures had brought into the service of his Abyssinian Majesty, was just at the moment talking to me. I at once consigned the gift to his care, and no *chef de cuisine*, without pot or pan, ever achieved a greater triumph in the gastronomic art than this old campaigner then accomplished on the verdant plain of *Lamgie*. Our venison, as it had been roasted without a pot, was also served without a dish; a few clean rushes, spread on the ground, answered the purpose of the best china or plate, and for knives and forks we used our fingers and two trusty swords; but notwithstanding the primitive character of our board, the

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three Franks squatting on the hard ground, near the *Tzana*, formed the most happy and contented party in that extensive camp.

During the night, the priests in a tented chapel were engaged in a kind of service that consisted entirely in melancholy howls and moans, accompanied by the harrowing sound of the negareet and the rattling of a ring-covered fork-like key. The harmony produced by this church music was far less endurable than the distracting laughter of a whole pack of hyenas. To sleep in the midst of this deafening noise was quite a task; but, after tossing to and fro on the hard soil for some hours, fatigue overwhelmed me, and I fell into so sound a slumber, that I did not even hear the entrance of some irreligious soldiers, who carried off the remains of our venison.

About eight o'clock his Majesty, accompanied by all the state dignitaries who were waiting outside his tent, proceeded to the camp church, where a fresh company of priests and *debterahs* were lustily exerting their lungs in chanting Psalms and Ethiopic hymns. The King and two or three of his magnates entered the canvass sanctuary, but all the rest of his suite, deterred by conscious guilt, joined the mighty multitude, who, at a respectful distance, knelt in devotional attitudes on the soft grass and fragrant herbage. Immediately after service there was a grand review of about 5,000 horsemen, who, in martial order, had assembled on the outskirts of the plain. The King, accompanied by his chiefs, all mounted on beautiful horses, with lances erect and shields embossed with gold, dashed

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right into the centre of the opening lines, and in an instant every sword was unsheathed and spear poised. The manœuvres, which principally consisted in skilful charges and retreats, in throwing and picking up the spear at full gallop, lasted about an hour; and then, in military order, led by the King himself, the whole division darted at full speed around the camp, till they came in front of the royal tent, where every one leaped out of his saddle, and in grave silence awaited his Majesty's retreat.

In the afternoon, Mr. Bell and myself were summoned to the royal tent, where, for some time, we conversed on several of the most important articles of our faith. I was quite astonished to find that his Majesty was well acquainted with many portions of God's Holy Word; and though his religious knowledge partook deeply of the superstitions and errors of his Church, yet it was quite evident that he had studied the Bible, and had also received a good impression from its sacred contents. I mentioned to him some of the results of modern missions, and if he had won a great battle, he could not have manifested greater delight and pleasure than he expressed on hearing of the achievements of the Gospel, and the triumphs of the Cross.

During our conversation, I incidentally alluded to the promise, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." On hearing this quotation, his whole countenance, usually stern and grave, assumed a happy and smiling expression, and, as if engaged in some deep reflection, he made a short pause in our

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conversation, and then exclaimed, in a tone in which mistaken piety and ardent zeal were evidently blent, "Let God give victory to my arms, and peace to my empire, and the Cross shall not lack support in this country!"

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CHAPTER V.

The King—His youthful Career—Death of his Uncle—Strife between the Sons—*Kasa's* Flight—Becomes a Freebooter, Farmer, Rebel, and powerful Chief—Defeat in the Lowlands—Breach with the Queen—Battle at *Tschako*—Capture of the Queen—Release—Treachery—Revenge—*Kasa* conquers *Godjam*—Imprisons *Beru Goshu*—Takes *Tigré*—Is crowned King Theodoros—Chastises the *Wollos*—Subjugates *Shoa*—Sequestration of Church Property—Embassy of the Copt Patriarch—Unsuccessful Intrigues—Revolting Barbarities.

THE name of King Theodoros, though familiar to the Arab and the Galla—the peasant on the Nile, in the west, and the wild shepherd on the desert along the Red Sea, in the east—is still, owing to the remoteness of his country, and the obscurity of his people, little known to Europe and European fame. We hear of him, whenever a volcanic eruption occurs on the outskirts of his territory, or French emissaries, prompted by religious zeal and political intrigue, excite a rebel's fatal hope in *Tigré;* but little, very little, is still known about the eventful and romantic history of the man, who, from a poor boy, in a reed-built convent, became the chief of a few freebooters, and from a chief of freebooters, the conqueror of numerous provinces, and the Sovereign of a great and extensive realm.

King Theodoros, the present ruler of Abyssinia,

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was born in *Quara*, a small province on the western borders of *Amhara*. His father, *Hailu Weleda Georgis*, though a reputed scion of Queen Saba's royal line, acquired no distinction in life, and awakened no sympathy or regret at his death. The small fortune of the deceased nobleman was soon seized and wasted by greedy relations, and the poor mother of *Kasa* (the surname of the future King), like numbers more in that demoralized country, where love is seldom hallowed by the religion that belongs to it, was, ere long, driven by want to eke out a miserable subsistence by the sale of *kosso*,* whilst the tender object of her affection found a refuge in a convent at *Tschangar*, twelve hours south-west of *Gondar*. In this asylum the young orphan might have spent some years in dreary indolence and life-sapping inactivity, had not *Dejatch Marou*, a defeated rebel, invaded the sanctuary, burned all its huts, and by killing and mutilating helpless boys glutted his cowardly vengeance on their victorious parents. *Kasa* eluded the inhuman cruelty of the dastardly foe, and, under the covert of night, gained the house of his powerful uncle, *Dejatch Confu*.

In this chieftain's home, which was the rendezvous of scheming and discontented rebels, the ardent youth imbibed an enthusiastic love of war, and a passionate ambition for daring and dangerous exploits.

* The *kosso* tree grows at an altitude of about 8,000 feet. Its beautiful flowers, which hang in profusion on every branch, are a specific against the tapeworm, from which all Abyssinians suffer.

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His courage, which knew no fear, and shrank from no obstacle, soon secured him the favour of his guardian, and the admiration of his troops; and the late aspirant for precarious honours in the Church might have attained the highest dignity in the State, had not death deprived him of his potent guardian and generous benefactor. The two sons and heirs of *Confu*, as it will also sometimes happen in other lands, had hardly consigned the mortal remains of their parent to its last resting-place, when they began to fight and quarrel about the patrimony.

Dejatch Goshu Beru, the valiant, crafty, and plotting Governor of *Damot* and *Godjam*, eagerly watched the issue of this insane fratricidal strife, and when the whole province had been reduced to anarchy, confusion, and disorder, he invaded it with his lawless hordes, and, almost without any resistance, made himself master of the most fertile and populous parts of Abyssinia. *Kasa*, who had joined the partisans of the elder brother, fled before the ferocious and unsparing conqueror to *Sarago*, in *Alava*, where, concealed in the hut of a kind peasant, he eluded for more than a month the pursuit of the ruthless foe. It is narrated that, some years later, when *Kasa's* military successes and triumphs had achieved for him the title of *Dejatch*, he was sent to *Alava*, to repress and quell an insurrection in that district. The rebels, without resistance, were awed into submission; and, to prevent any future troubles, every insurgent was mulcted in a penalty of feeding for a week half a score or more of voracious

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troops. *Kasa's* former benefactor refused to receive the unwelcome guests, and upon being dragged before the chief, he was instantly recognised by the recipient of his bounty, and, amidst the plaudits of the soldiery, exalted to the *Shumat* of *Sarago*, and rewarded with the gift of twenty dollars, eight oxen, eight cows, and eight male and female slaves.

To return from our digression. We find *Kasa*, after his escape from *Beru Goshu's* bloodhounds, at the head of a band of seventy robbers, in the marshy and malarious borders of the western kolla, or low-land, subsisting on the illicit gains of bloodless highway robberies. The banditti, weary of their leader's strict discipline, conspired against his life; but before they could perpetrate their fell deed, the secret was divulged, and, in a terrible encounter, *Kasa*, with a few bravos, disabled and routed his enemies. With this small band of trusty and faithful followers, he now joined *Derar*, another desperado, and these two boon companions for some months were the terror of the *Tougrourees* and the scourge of all the *Khowadgees*, or Mohammedan merchants, on the road between *Wochnee* and *Matamma*.

Disgusted with a vocation which, though not disreputable in a lawless and disorganized country, he yet had so much sense of moral rectitude, that he soon shrank in perfect horror from a freebooter's trade, and returned again to an honest livelihood in his own native place. The bold exploits and gallant feats which had rendered the robber's name famous throughout *Abyssinia* and *Soudan*, attracted crowds

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of needy, disaffected, and improvident chiefs and soldiers around him; and the daring bandit, whose strong arm and ambitious heart could not well brook the narrow bounds of a farmer's home, again seized his sword, and, under the pretence of checking oppression and restraining violence, unfurled the standard of rebellion.

The *Waisero Menin*, mother of *Ras Ali*, and nominally Queen of all the provinces west of the *Taccazy*, now began to dread the growing power of *Kasa*, and, prompted by deep, passionate animosity, which invariably characterized her proceedings towards those who defied her authority, or did not minister to her revolting excesses, she despatched a large army to crush, as she said, "the *kosso* vendor's son." Informed of the expedition, *Kasa*, without delay, hastened to meet the enemy; but no sooner did the latter come in sight of their opponents than they were seized with a panic, and fled to *Dembea*. The cunning woman had now recourse to intrigue, and the witchery of soft blandishments, which she had often found more powerful than her armies, to entrap a formidable enemy; but *Kasa*, who saw the bait by which he was to be caught, met all these overtures with indifference or polite evasion. Baffled and embarrassed, the treacherous Queen was more than ever intent upon revenging herself on the presumptuous rebel, and as open violence and crafty art had equally failed, she did not shrink from compassing the redoubtable chieftain's death at the high price of her own grandchild's honour, the daughter of *Ras Ali*, whom she

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gave him in marriage. The young wife, instead of abetting the infamous design of her grandmother, with a constancy and affection seldom witnessed in that demoralized country, foiled every attempt on her beloved husband's life, by diverting the dangers which threatened him on herself.

About this time the Arabs near the borders, conscious of their neighbours' intestine feuds and quarrels, made several inroads on Abyssinian settlements, an affront which the Queen commissioned *Kasa*, who had resided in the country, to revenge. The bold chief obeyed the order; and, with an army badly equipped and inferior in number, he unexpectedly fell upon the infuriated Arabs and their Egyptian auxiliaries, and, reckless of life, maintained for several hours an unequal and destructive conflict. His thinning ranks and a serious wound compelled him to retreat, but the valour he had displayed during the fiery contest struck terror and awe into the hearts of the victors, and they allowed their enemies to retreat from the field of battle without any attempt to impede their march, or to make prisoners of the fugitive forces. The remains of this forlorn-hope, who were either wounded or afflicted with fever, on reaching the mountains of *Tschelga*, *Kasa* immediately sent to quarters in the districts and villages along the *Tzana*, whilst he himself proceeded to *Tschangar*, to have his wounds cured by a physician of that place. A good reeking piece of *broundo** being better adapted to an Abyssinian constitution than all the horrid drugs and

* Broundo is the name for raw meat.

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sickening concoctions which civilization has discovered, the *Æsculapius* of *Tschangar* informed his patient that he could not extract a ball which an infidel Arab had lodged in his side, nor restore him to his wonted health and vigour, unless he received first a fat cow and a large jar of butter. *Kasa* thought the doctor's prescription a good opportunity to remind the Queen that he was still in the land of the living; but, as that dissolute and rancorous woman anticipated that the wound or poison would speedily rid her of an implacable foe, she sent him a joint of beef, with a sarcastic message that men of his rank and quality were not entitled to a whole cow.

Frantic with rage at this fresh insult, the wounded chief impatiently bided the few days the faithful leech required for his recovery, and when this was successfully effected, he hastily flew to *Quara*, where he assembled his trusty followers, and before the Queen could, through the mediation of her niece, appease the wrath she had so causelessly provoked, a rebel army was on its way to *Dembea* and *Gondar*. Convinced that no expression of regret, and no assurance of royal favour could heal the breach or avert the impending struggle, the Queen, with the prompt vigour and energy which she had so often displayed when beset by danger, despatched a strong force to intercept the rebels' progress, and to destroy their leader. The hostile armies met near *Tschako*, and, in a fierce engagement which took place the same day, the Royalists sustained a most signal and complete defeat. *Kasa*, besides a vast number of pri-

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soners, captured, what was of inestimable value to him, more than a thousand muskets. Amongst the prisoners was a proud chief, named *Dejatch Wonderad*, who, in a council of war at *Gondar*, loudly boasted that he would bring the *kosso* vendor's son alive or dead to the foot of the throne. *Kasa*, to whom *Wonderad's* speech was reported, sent for him during the evening, and, to the amazement of all present, handed him a dose of the obnoxious though harmless draught, adding, in a tone of biting sarcasm, "As my mother did no business to-day, you will accept *kosso* instead of *teff* for your evening repast."

A war *à l'outrance* now began to rage all over Western Abyssinia. The Queen, anxious to retrieve past failures and to recover lost territory, assumed the generalship of her own army, and at *Balaha*, near the *Tzana*, she fell unexpectedly upon the foe with a violence, resolution, and bravery that defied all resistance, and overcame every opposition. Unfortunately, the pusillanimous chiefs did not emulate the heroism of their fearless Queen, and the combat, thus auspiciously commenced, was so supinely pursued that it ignominiously terminated in the flight of the imperial troops, and the captivity of their bold and undaunted commander.

Ras Ali, the son of the *Waisero*, and father-in-law of *Kasa*, keenly smarted under the disgraceful imprisonment of his mother, and the check to his own aspirations after a crown; but as he thought it imprudent to incense a foe dreaded by his chiefs and regarded as invincible by his troops, he hung up the sword, and

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had recourse to diplomacy. *Kasa*, who to an impetuous temper unites a generous heart, readily yielded to the *Ras's* suggestions, and, on condition that under the title of *Dejatch* he should hold the conquered provinces as fiefs of the Crown, he at once gave liberty to the princess, and peace to the troubled and distracted empire.

A peace obtained by craft could not be of long duration; and in 1853, scarcely two years after the battle of *Balaha*, *Kasa* was formally superseded in his government, and proclaimed a traitor and a rebel. This outrageous breach of a solemn pledge excited universal indignation amongst the *Dejatch's* partisans, and the soldier as well as the peasant burned to revenge on a licentious Queen and her perfidious son, the wrongs of their admired hero, and the insults of their beloved chief. The demon of civil war, once evoked, soon convulsed the whole kingdom, and every one, young and old—the needy, who coveted plunder, and the ambitious, who sought promotion—all spurred on by different motives, hastened to take part in a conflict which was to decide the fate of the throne and the destiny of the reigning family. At *Aishal*, in *Dembea*, a most sanguinary and destructive battle was fought between the rival forces. *Ras Ali*, as Mr. Bell, who was in the engagement, told me, displayed a bravery and daring that elicited general admiration; but, notwithstanding the despairing effort of the fated chief, the rule of the licentious semi-Christian *Galla* usurpers had reached its goal, and before night their

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last descendant was a fugitive for life, whilst his despised foe remained victor of the field and gainer of the crown.

The conqueror at *Aishal* now marched to *Quami Tscherk*, in *Godjam*, to revenge his own and his country's sufferings on the ruthless *Beru Goshu*. In the evening preceding the engagement which freed Abyssinia from a dreaded and remorseless chieftain, *Kasa* and his brother officers were discussing, over some reeking joints of *brounda*, the merits of their respective troops, when one of the principal magnates replied, "What need we to fear? Since no one can resist us, how much less you, our dauntless and gallant leader?" *Kasa* instantly threw himself on his face, and, in the midst of his hardened companions of war, exclaimed, in a solemn tone of voice, "I praise thee, O God, that thou hast manifested thy goodness to a poor sinner like me! Whom thou humblest is humbled, and whom thou exaltest is exalted. Thine is the power and glory for ever and ever." The next day *Beru Goshu* was captured, and, with a stone round his neck,* led into the presence of the fugitive whose life he had formerly sought to destroy. The magnanimous chief ordered a cloth to be spread for his captive, and, in most condescending lan-

* If a person in Abyssinia insults a superior, or is guilty of some misconduct against a master, he puts a stone on his neck, and, with bended head, cries, "Pardon me! pardon me!" This is continued without intermission till the offended party removes the stone, and gives the formal absolution, saying, "May God pardon thee!"

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guage, asked him what fate he would have awarded him if their fortunes had been reversed. *Beru Goshu* sullenly replied, "You would have been executed." This bold and unexpected retort brought a score of swords out of their sheaths; but the conqueror, instead of approving the rage of the nobles by whom he was surrounded, publicly acknowledged the Divine goodness which, more than the valour of his troops, had saved him from such a cruel death.

During these events, the prisoner's wife, unconscious of her husband's fate, together with a considerable number of troops, bravely repulsed every assault on the rock, *Tshebella Amba*, where they had intrenched themselves. *Kasa*, anxious to prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood, sent the prisoner, his two brothers-in-law, and several dignitaries to solicit the lady, on the peril of her own and the lives of those near and dear to her, to put an end to hostilities by evacuating the rock. The affectionate wife laconically replied, "Let *Kasa* take the *Amba;* but let him not give me back my husband." The request was granted, and *Beru Goshu* will no doubt, to the end of his days, bemoan, on the isolated summit of the *Zar Amba*, the conjugal indifference of his treacherous and false partner.

The ambition of *Kasa* grew as his power increased, and since the western provinces were now all united under his sway, he cast a longing eye on *Tigrē* and *Shoa*, two powerful states which, since the reign of *Tecla Georgis*, in 1780, had maintained the independence of their Governments and the administration of

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their respective laws. *Dejatch Oubie*, the governor of *Tigrē*, anticipated *Kasa's* intention, and, to avoid a surprise, he assembled a well-organized army, and amidst the alpine heights of *Semien* awaited the enemy's approach. On a cold, raw, and stormy day in February, 1856, the *Amhara* forces, after a long and fatiguing march, came in sight of the wide-spreading outlines of *Oubie's* well-ordered camp. With that activity and promptitude which marked all his movements, *Kasa* at once marshalled his army in battle array, and, contrary to their expectations and remonstrances, ordered them to charge the enemy. At this command a loud murmur of discontent broke from the serried lines of his fierce warriors, and for some moments *Kasa* himself stood appalled at these symptoms of fear and insubordination;* but as, in the fortune of that day, the prospects of a crown were involved, the resolute chief, in that clear and confident tone of voice which had often done him more service than the sword he so bravely wields, rode in front of his army, and in a short address, in which he recapitulated to the breathless multitude their former glorious achievements, he defiantly added, "And now, after all our numerous conquests, does yonder rheumatic dotard chill your prowess? Do yonder guns, charged with powder and rags, cow your souls? Are yonder rocks and chasm a barrier to your bravery? Follow me, and to-morrow by this time my name will be no more *Kasa* but Theodoros, for God has given

* I got some of these particulars from Mr. Bell, who took an active part in the battle of *Semien*.

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me the kingdom." Reanimated by the words of their dauntless leader, the countless host rushed on the expectant foe, who welcomed them with a shower of iron balls and well-aimed spears. The groans of the dying and the war shouts of the living,—the echoes of the cliffs and the rolling thunder of the storm, all combined to make that day one of the most terrible in the annals of Abyssinian warfare.

Evening was fast approaching, and the shades of night were beginning to confound friend and foe, still the desperate struggle raged with unabated ardour, and the carnage continued with unmitigated fury. *Oubie*, who had on that day evinced a generalship and gallantry that recalled to many a scarred head the deeds of their former adored *Sabagadis*, was at last, unknown to his soldiers, forced by exhaustion and age, to seek a brief rest in a deep dell at the outskirts of the battle-field. This almost unguarded retreat was discovered by a detachment of *Kasa's* troops, and before the old chief could recover from the sudden surprise, he was seized and carried in triumph to the enemy's camp. The Tigréans, bewildered and panic-stricken at their leader's captivity, were immediately thrown into the utmost consternation, and before the different chiefs could summon courage to rally their disordered retainers, some had sought safety in flight, others in passive submission, and not a few in a soldier's honourable grave.

On the following day, February 4th, *Kasa* besieged the *Amba Boahil*, 13,500 feet above the level of the sea; and on the 5th, he was crowned under the name

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of King *Theodoros*, in the Church *Mariam Deresgie*, by the *Aboona Salama*, the Metropolitan of Abyssinia. After the coronation, the royal troops took possession of the *Amba Hai*, on whose summit, of 14,000 feet altitude, *Oubie* kept his treasures. Here, to their agreeable surprise, they found two cannons, seven thousand muskets, a great quantity of gold and silver plate, and above forty thousand Austrian dollars, besides a vast quantity of copper vessels, and a countless number of coloured Venetian bottles, which the Abyssinian gentry use instead of wine-glasses in drinking their hydromel.

The King having appointed a governor over the conquered province, retraced his steps to *Gondar*, from whence, after a brief respite from incessant toil and fatigue, he directed his march southward towards the *Wollo Galla* country—the old enemies of his creed, and for a long period the ruthless oppressors of his people. Elated with former successes, and confident in their military prowess, the *Wollos*, who are divided into *saba beit*, or seven clans, at once united their strength to oppose a foe whose power and warlike skill they had just cause to dread.

At *Saga Gora* the royal forces came in contact with *Adara Bille*, the treacherous host of Dr. Krapf; and in the very first charge the Abyssinians, led to the onslaught by their martial Sovereign, displayed a courage which struck terror into the hearts of their oppressors, and made them shrink from encountering a foe whose natural animosity long years of relentless tyranny had stimulated to a pitch bordering on a kind of religious

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frenzy. *Adara Bille* and upwards of a thousand *Gallas* fell in battle, or perished under the executioner's knife, whilst the country around was plundered, and the poor women and children carried captive into the various provinces of Abyssinia. The *Wollo Galla*, after this defeat, did not renew the contest; but, chafed and dispirited, they precipitately fled to their mountain fastnesses, to brood over their late disaster, and to concert means for future action. Well acquainted with the treacherous character of his foes, the King, in anticipation of their wily design, at once fortified the *Amba Magdala*, which rises 3,500 feet above the level of the surrounding scene, and then, leaving a garrison strong enough to check any sudden inroad upon his conquered territory, he turned towards *Shoa*, the only province in Abyssinia which still maintained the independence of its government and regal power.

The fierce and proud *Shoaner*, although they professed the most supreme scorn for the *kosso* vendor's son, yet did not neglect to make every preparation, and to adopt the most effective measures to oppose his onward progress. Their army, which consisted of upwards of fifty thousand brave and valiant troops, was, in regard to numbers, superior to that of the King; but the enthusiasm which prompted the assailants did not animate their opponents, for, whilst the latter felt that they were about to fight for a monarch who revelled in shameless vice and hateful excesses, the former were ready to shed their life's blood for a Sovereign beloved for his manly virtues,

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and venerated, nay, almost idolized, for his dauntless heroism.

On the plain of *Bala Worka* the long-delayed conflict took place. The *Shoaner*, anxious to maintain their old renown for bravery, rushed to the charge with a courage that defied all resistance, and yielded to no opposition. Their uncontrolled passions, however, blinded their judgment, and made them deaf to the commands of their leaders, and thus their savage bloodthirstiness turned what seemed to promise victory into a disgraceful and complete defeat. *Hailo Malakat*, the successor of *Sahale Sellasie*,* died ere the disastrous intelligence arrived, and his son *Menelek* yielded himself a voluntary captive to the conqueror.

The revolution which wrested the several distracted and misgoverned provinces from the grasp of petty tyrants, and brought them under the sway of a powerful and energetic ruler, being now consummated, the King left his royal prisoner to be the companion of his son at the *Amba Magdala*, and then hastened back to *Gondar*, where he spent the rainy season in redressing the grievances, and in reforming the abuses of former reigns.

The hierarchy who, by many overt acts, had manifested their antipathy to the new King and their sympathy with every rising rebel, were deservedly selected to expiate their unchristian bias towards anarchy and disorder by the establishment of a new

* To this potentate Captain Harris was sent on a special mission by the British Government in 1841.

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code for the regulation of Church property, and the administration of her revenues.

Since the reign of *Yasous*, A.D. 1680, the Abyssinian Church, partly by intrigue and partly by intimidation, had acquired vast landed property. These extensive domains, which comprise a third of the country, are free from all imposts and taxation. The King, unwilling to increase the burden of the peasant at the expense of the Church, at once sequestrated all this property for the use of the State; and instead of swarms of ignorant and vicious priests, who obtained ordination in order to live without labour, and assumed the turban * in order to enjoy luxurious ease, he appointed two priests and three deacons for each church, and to these he gave small tracts of land to cultivate for their maintenance. The storm of indignation and ebullition of wrathful feeling, which this new edict provoked, taught him the impracticability of carrying into immediate execution, a policy so important for the interests and welfare of his country; but although he bided his time, he did not abandon his plan, and in 1860, a little after my arrival in the country, the suspended law came into full force.

In December, 1856, whilst the King was encamped at *Jan Meeda*, near *Debra Tabor*, he obtained intelligence of the arrival of the Copt Patriarch, *Cyrillus*, who had been despatched as Ambassador Extraordinary by Said Pasha, the Viceroy of Egypt. At the first interview the King expressed his surprise that a *Lik Papas*, or Patriarch, should

* The turban is the badge of clerical dignity.

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assume the office of a Mohammedan representative, and, as if anxious to make the proud priest smart for the supercilious contempt which he had evinced for the Abyssinians since his arrival in the country, he inquired, in a tone of sarcastic irony, whether the propositions he offered for his acceptance were dictated by love to Christ or devotion to Said Pasha. The Patriarch, galled by these taunts, merged the mildness of the priest in the ire of the offended Ambassador, and, in words to which royalty, even in the wilds of Africa, is unaccustomed, gave utterance to his hitherto suppressed passion, an indiscretion which caused him and the Aboona to be placed under arrest in the royal camp. This of course created a strong sensation; and from every quarter priests and monks repaired to the royal presence to intercede in behalf of their ecclesiastical chiefs. To curb the importunity of these clamorous petitioners, he callously replied that he left the solution of his quarrel with a higher Power, and that if he was wrong in not complying with the conditions of the Patriarch, which required that he should expel his few valued European friends, and grant various privileges to his Mohammedan subjects, the men whom they hypocritically styled saints would, no doubt, like *Tecla Haimanot* be favoured with wings to fly out of the thorny enclosure in which they were confined. Unfortunately, this volant power was not imparted to the incarcerated and well-guarded prelates; a disappointment which bent their stout minds, and taught the Gospel maxim

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of humility to their proud hearts. The King, satisfied that the salutary penance of five days' imprisonment had not been inflicted in vain, came to terms with his prisoners, and, in the sight of the applauding army, the Patriarch and Aboona were led out of their demolished prickly fence to more commodious and agreeable quarters.

In the following November the Patriarch obtained leave to depart, and never did a chief pastor more willingly quit his flock, or a flock more anxiously sigh for the disappearance of their chief pastor, than the Abyssinians did for the hated *Cyrillus*, and *Cyrillus* for that of the equally hated Abyssinians.

The King having got rid of the troublesome Ambassador, and, as he thought, restored the blessings of peace and security to a long torn and bleeding empire, seriously contemplated to devote his time and attention to matters connected with the prosperity of the Church, and the development of the varied resources of his extensive country, when news of a rebellion in *Godjam* forced him again to the field. Goaded to desperation by these perpetual revolutions, his fiery temper burst through every bond of humanity, and most atrocious and revolting deeds were, regardless of sex and station, perpetrated on the hapless victims of his vengeance. The rebellion was crushed in blood, but the sting of remorse rankled deep in the heart of the despot; and when, in the ensuing year, his affectionate and tenderly-attached Queen died, he publicly acknowledged that he had suffered a just retribution for

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his cruelty towards the women of *Godjam*, and made a solemn vow never more to allow passion to blind his intellect, and to steel his heart.

Here I shall for the present close the history of King *Theodoros*. His subsequent exploits, capricious reforms, and restless ambition, to which I shall have frequently to revert, will be detailed in the different parts of this narrative.

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CHAPTER VI.

Ignorance of Court Etiquette—Excursion to the *Gumarah*—Seclusion of Aristocratic Ladies—Comparative Advantage of Scanty Clothing—Dread of a Famine—Open-air Repose—Disagreeable Intrusion—Dormitory of an Anglo-Abyssinian Noble—Morning Salutation—Sham Fight—Roads—Hot Mineral Springs—Sanitary Virtue—Origin—Tropical Conflagration—A Royal City—Disappointed Hopes—Gaffat.

I HAD now been several days in the camp, and should probably have been condemned to a life of inactivity for several days longer without being able to find a plausible excuse for craving the royal sanction to my departure before the orgies of Easter, had not Mr. Bell, on account of illness, proposed an excursion to the hot springs on the banks of the *Gumarah*, which lay on the very road I had to traverse on my way to *Debra Tabor*, whither Mr. Bronkhorst was conveying our luggage. The following day, whilst at breakfast in the royal tent, I communicated my request to His Majesty, and, in a tone which the moustached European passport functionaries have still to acquire, he promptly replied, "Go in peace, my son. I will give orders that your wants and safety shall be ensured." During the repast which, owing to the

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fast, consisted simply of teff cakes, *dillik*,* and an abundance of fermented hydromel, I nearly lost the esteem and regard I had hitherto enjoyed, and that, too, through an unconscious offence against the etiquette of aristocratic life. According to the Abyssinian notion, every man who claims to be of patrician descent and noble lineage, must possess a fine shama, lined with a deep red border, and be enabled to emulate the noise of a certain unclean animal whilst eating his meals. This elegant acquirement, which I had unfortunately not yet attained, drew upon me the frowns as well as the whispering censures of the guests. Unconscious of the cause of this unexpected notoriety, I asked Mr. Bell whether there was anything peculiar in my appearance or deportment that provoked criticism. "Certainly," was the rejoinder; "your conduct is so ungentlemanly, that all the guests think you must be a very low fellow, and quite unaccustomed to move in genteel society." "And to what am I indebted for this good opinion?" returned I. "To the mode in which you eat; for if you were a gentleman, you would show by the smacking of your lips the exalted station to which you belong; but since you masticate your food in this inaudible manner, every one believes that you are a beggar, and accustomed to eat in that unostentatious quietness which pretended poverty prompts individuals of that class to adopt." I assured them that my breach of

* Dillik is a fashionable Abyssinian sauce, composed of red pepper, onions, and an admixture of water in fast, and butter in non-fasting days.

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etiquette ought to be attributed to the difference of the customs in my own country, and not to the low motive they assigned, an apology which amply satisfied the most accomplished courtier in the royal tent.

Orders having already been communicated to a division of Mr. Bell's horse to accompany us, those faithful and attached warriors, glad to enjoy a short respite from the perpetual toils of battle, well mounted, and in a soldierlike attitude, awaited their respected general's appearance. A crowd of beggars, who, like the carrion-scenting hyenas, invariably follow the camp, instantly surrounded the generous *Lik-a-maquas;* but as neither of us had then much to spare, we vaulted into our saddles, and without delay made our escape from the importunities of the clamorous host of lazy mendicants. An hour's sharp ride beside the smooth waters of the *Tzana*, conducted us into a green dark-leafed forest glade, where, in the thickest shade, concealed from every profane gaze, Mrs. Bell —an Abyssinian lady of rank—surrounded by a bevy of bronzed damsels, awaited her spouse. It being midday, and the heat very oppressive, we gladly availed ourselves of the cool and lovely retreat to while away the noontide in luxurious ease. Our escort imitated the good example, and with that peculiar faculty, which I had so often envied, of wooing repose whenever it could be indulged in, the little wood soon resounded with a chorus of nasal sounds that hushed more effectively than the most stentorian voice the disagreeable chatter of the mocking and fearless monkeys that were practising their

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gambols in the branches of the trees. Several detachments of troops passed our halting-place, and, in anticipation of obtaining some news, or getting a little snuff* from the Frankish priest, they were inclined to intrude on our privacy; but on being told that a *woizèro*, or lady of rank, was near, they all hurried away from the forbidden ground.

The seclusion of women, which Christianity has abolished in all countries and climes where it has found an entrance, is still a universal practice throughout Abyssinia. Every lady of rank, after her marriage, is closely watched by stern janitors when at home, and enveloped and swathed in a suffocating quantity of white shamas and cotton belts when she rides abroad. This precaution, which makes the husband the guardian of his wife's virtue, may be a safeguard against criminal intrigue amongst the caged odalisques in the harem of an indolent Turkish Pasha; but in Abyssinia, where a chieftain spends six months of the year in the camp, or on marauding expeditions, this revolting law, which transfers the moral responsibility of the mother and wife to unprincipled domestics, promotes the very mischief it is designed to check. We lingered in the deep seclusion of the forest, where no profane eye could admire the charms of my friend's

* The Abyssinians condemn the use of tobacco because they believe that it originally grew out of the tomb of Arius, but their contempt for the fragrant weed, with a strange inconsistency, is only confined to smoking, and not to snuffing, a habit to which men and women are most inveterately addicted.

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partner, till the heat had a little abated, and then again mounted our horses and mules and rode on.

The lady being entrusted to the charge of a troop of male and female attendants, we left her *à l'Abyssinie*, to pursue the most difficult path, whilst we struck across the plain, and followed the most easy. Two hours' ride brought us to the river *Erib*, which we had some trouble to ford on the backs of our swimming mules. Being unaccustomed to this mode of navigation, my boots, stockings, and trousers became thoroughly soaked, a mishap which led my semi-nude companions to philosophize on the comparative utility of our respective garments. I did not feel disposed to controvert their prejudice in favour of the minimum of dress; on the contrary, as a compliment to their style of decorating the human frame, I threw off every wet article I had on, and enveloped myself in the folds of a clean and ungreased shama which Mr. Bell lent me. Late at noon we reached *Shinah*, a village consisting of half a score of sheds and an equal number of peasant families, where we halted for the night.

Our detachment of troops, the most renowned in the army for daring deeds and gallant achievements, though admired when ravaging the *Wollo* country, were, to judge from the anxious looks and terrified countenances which greeted our arrival, not much courted when they approached one of their own native settlements. The poor peasants, who dreaded to receive a dozen of these hungry heroes for guests,

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were in an ecstasy of delight when they saw them saluting their chief, and cantering across the plain towards the neighbouring villages.

The fear of an impending famine, which a night's sojourn of our troops might have brought upon the small settlement, being now removed, men and women vied with each other to enhance the comforts of the distinguished and considerate travellers. We had selected the two best huts in the place for our accommodation, but a brief inspection of our quarters ocularly convinced me that it had other occupants than swarthy natives, and to avoid these there was no alternative except the wide meadow, whither I speedily repaired, and between two blazing piles of wood—the spectres to chase away wild quadrupeds—I slept on the soft wet grass quite as comfortably as in a four-post bed, encumbered with stifling silken draperies.

At early dawn the clatter and tramp of horses roused me from my sleep. Doubtful whether to get up or to doze on, I was about to do the latter, when a division of our numerous escort, attracted by the glowing embers of the fire, flung themselves on the ground around me, and more by the effluvia of their tallowy *shamas* than the clatter of their garrulous tongues, drove me from my temporary resting-place. Ablution, toilet, and other accessories of civilization being unnecessary in a country where towels and washing-stands are unknown, I had merely to wipe the dew from my face, and to adjust my priestly turban, and I stood ready for a journey, a levee, or any other important enterprise.

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A nauseous and sickening concoction of coffee and honey, which affection had prompted Lady Bell to prepare for her consort's morning repast, the kind soldier requested me, through a young slave girl, to share with him. I followed the tripping and lively *Galla* through the devious windings of several thorny enclosures, where savage curs in guardianship of the village flocks could with difficulty be restrained from an assault on the stranger, till we came to a sooty hut —the nocturnal abode of the Anglo-Abyssinian noble. A doorway of a few slender canes brought us into a most dirty, foul, and smoky lair. I stumbled over logs of hard wood towards a dim and faintly-visible fire, which neither answered the purpose of emitting heat nor of diffusing light. "Here is a hand, and if you object to the obnoxious fumes, a well-filled pipe is a sure antidote," exclaimed a laughing and cheerful voice, which I recognised as that of my friend. I grasped the extended hand, and, guided by its steady motion, landed safely on a rickety alga—the honoured couch of the imperial minister and his spouse. Instead of my usual morning salutation, I ejaculated, "Get out of this horrid den into the green and soft meadow, where you can breathe the most invigorating and fragrant air that ever mortal inhaled." "Pooh, pooh!" returned he, "don't lecture me on the luxuries of dews and blue skies, to which I am condemned eight months out of every twelve; but squat down here on a skin free from all living attractions while I pour you out, in this half broken cup, the only china in my posses-

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sion, a draught which, if I have not forgotten the good old tongue, 'cheers but not inebriates.'" I obeyed the injunction, and, beneath dense clouds which imparted an inky tinge to our unwashed faces, passed away about an hour in listening to my friend's ludicrous comparison of the happy existence in savagedom, with the exquisite miseries inflicted by the absurd conventionalities of civilization.

And now the voices of the servants, the neighing of the horses, and the clank and clash of lance and sword reminded us that the time for our departure had arrived. A numerous assemblage of male and female attendants, together with several officers and the whole population of the straggling village, in a state of semi-nudity—the attitude of great deference and respect—awaited the appearance of the popular and beloved Lik-a-maquas. The reed door being pushed aside, all the civil and military authorities prostrated themselves on the unclean ground, and, in a hoarse chorus, bawled forth a whole string of morning salutations.

The orders for marching were then given, and in an instant the whole cavalcade coursed and bounded over the wide-spreading plain, as if engaged in riding a race. It was an exciting and picturesque sight to see those hardy and active warriors, clad in their loose fluttering *shamas*, short cotton breeches, and leopard-skin *dino*, now rushing at a furious rate to the assault of an imaginary enemy, and now again, with flashing eyes and ferocious shouts, spurring to the rescue of a friend. Here a lance, poised by a sinewy

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arm, flew hissing through the air; there the blow of a formidable curved sword was dexterously parried by an opponent's weapon. The manœuvre lasted till every horse was sweltering, and every rider was panting for breath.

By the time this exercise was over, we had traversed the rich pasture land of *Foggara*, and entered the wooded, hilly district of *Wanzagie*. The heat, though intense, was very much mitigated by the thick leafy branches of the venerable trees, which warded off the hot rays of the noontide sun. We passed a few isolated huts, in the charge of little tawny urchins, who, at the sight of the white men and their escort, ran affrighted into the rank grass and thorny bushes to conceal themselves till the travellers had disappeared.

As we advanced, the country became more wild, and the path more precipitous. Monkeys abounded in the trees, and also a few savage-looking boars prowled about the marshy banks of the numerous rivulets in search of roots, but no human being was visible except three miserable, haggard wretches, on whose countenances vice had traced its appalling characters, and these, like ourselves, were wending their way towards the celebrated medicinal hot springs. Late at noon we espied the deep-fissured gorge through which the river threaded its winding course. The descent being steep and overgrown with entangled shrubs and mimosas, we consigned our animals to the care of the servants, and scrambled, quite indifferent to the scratches inflicted on our hands and feet, down

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to the *Gumarah*, where, on a clean grassy spot, I was soon comfortably established.

The hot mineral springs, which in large volumes well out of the dull, brown basalt rock, are situated on a sloping declivity close to the river's edge. A small, insignificant building, raised over a basin two feet in depth, into which the sanative water bubbles, constituted the bath for the lame, the blind, and the halt; whilst those who were afflicted with scrofulous, scorbutic, leprous and other contagious diseases had to perform their lavations in an enclosed pool a little lower down, where they enjoyed the double advantage of getting cool as well as already tested water.

These baths, which are continually surrounded by most haggard and ghastly objects, vividly reminded me of Bethesda's pool. There were men and women, youths and maidens, all more or less branded by the indelible curse of depravity and vice. Some of these helpless creatures were squatted on the bare soil, some lay at full length in the sun's fiery rays, and some leaned their aching frame for support against a rough stone, or the trunk of a decayed tree; but notwithstanding the incurable character of the maladies with which the majority were smitten, the cadaverous eyes of all watched with intense anguish for a vacancy in the two ever-filled kennel-like structures,—the only objects of their longing desire,—the only bright spots that shed beams of hope in their souls' dark despair.

My friend, Mr. Bell, whom a long residence in this country had rendered perfectly indifferent to mephitic influences, out of consideration to me, ordered the

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upper bath to be cleaned, but I had no desire to prevent any one of the numerous pitiful groups clustered around these imaginary health-imparting fountains from enjoying the remedy on which they placed their vain expectations of a cure.

Saints and demons, angels and fiends, whom the natives respectively bless or curse for whatever is good or bad in their country, come in also for a share of the virtues attributed to these salubrious springs. According to their legend, holy *Kirkos*, a man of no mean saintly repute, by his love for the truth and zeal for the Gospel contracted the enmity of the unbelievers, who, to glut their revenge, awarded him a crown of martyrdom. The soul of the fictitious saint, released from its earthly thralls, winged its flight to the regions of the blest, but his mortal remains, uninterred by the miscreants, were devoured by large vultures called *amoras*, and his bones dropped near the *Gumarah*, on those very spots from which gush forth the healing waters—the incontestable proofs of his piety, and the everlasting memorials of his benevolence.

To prevent these resorts of the sick and suffering from being overcrowded, the healing virtue of the water is restricted to seven days; after that period, their efficacy becomes neutralized, and should the patient delay his departure, he may be honoured for his temerity by a visit from the *Nedatitu*, a race of graceless female Genii, who riot in carnage, and are reported to feast on human flesh. I had no inclination to protract my stay in this lazar spot of disease and ill-

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famed home of savage harpies, and therefore, after two days' rest, I scaled again the lofty heights which rise almost perpendicularly on both sides of the *Gumarah*, and set out for *Gaffat*, near *Debra Tabor*, the capital of *Begemeder*.

The ascent out of this gloomy dell, where every breath seemed tainted with the poison of incurable disease, brought us again into a cooler atmosphere, and a more exhilarating scene. My mule being fresh, and my servants well fed and greased, we all three moved along at a rate that startled many a wild beast out of its lonely haunt.

The narrow untenanted valley of *Wanzagie*, which we had traversed by noon, brought us to a broken and unfinished-looking range of rocks, an excrescence of the alpine *Guna*. We halted a few minutes to recover our expended energy, and then, with a desperate effort, slowly and cautiously climbed up the rugged acclivities, where an unspeakably grand spectacle presented itself to our gaze. The whole country to the north and east, far beyond the limits of the eye's range, mountains and valleys, rocks and chasms, all lay bathed in one mighty mass of bright blazing fire. Not knowing which way to take, for the devouring element came crackling and hissing nearer to the spot where we stood, I turned to my servants, and inquired for the path we could safely pursue; but as they were in terror of the hyenas and leopards, whose howls and yells rung ominously through the illuminated night air, they only thought of their own safety, and, whether I followed or not, they sped

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on, between creaking trees and flaming grasses, towards a black spot which was faintly visible through the fitful conflagration. The hot and clammy vapours which every gust of wind drove straight across our path, parched our lips, and produced a suffocating sensation in our heaving chests, still we dared not stop, but were compelled to hasten on, in search of a safe retreat. Now and then the fierce blaze, leaping and tossing in uncontrollable rage over every opposing barrier, presented a sight that filled the beholder with wonder, awe, and delight. A huge mountain just opposite to our path, around which the lurid flame rolled its desolating flood, afforded a sight I shall never forget. Now the red fire lighted it up to its summit with an intense bright glow; now volumes of thin white smoke suffused it with ghastly hues; anon, again, the ever-shifting winds shrouded it in impenetrable darkness. I watched for some time this grand rampart which, like a rock amidst the lashing waves, bade defiance to the devouring elements, when suddenly a severe blast swept a fiery torrent through the blackened underwood into furrows clothed with rank grass, and in an instant the white vapoury clouds, ignited by the freshening breeze, spread upwards and around till the whole mountain, to its wooded summit, flared and flickered in a blood-red flame, that diffused a glaring light for many miles over the surrounding country. The millions of glowing sparks that fell in sparkling showers from the burning trees expedited our march, and we were truly grateful when we reached the out-

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skirts of this Tophet, with no other injury than a few blisters, and very sore feet. A peasant, near whose abode we alighted, hospitably offered us the shelter of his roof, but the vast sheet of fire which was still blazing in all directions, induced me to prefer fronting the approaching foe under the open vault of heaven rather than in a dry and inflammable shed. Happily, our night's rest was not broken by the spread of the conflagration, and we rose from the clotty ground that had formed our common couch, a little aching in our limbs, yet refreshed enough to pursue our journey over the desolate, smouldering tracts towards the fertile fields and green meadows of *Debra Tabor*.

It was midday before we came in sight of the hill around whose base and terraced sides clustered, gorgeously illuminated in the sun's meridian rays, a mass of mean, tottering huts, which, on a nearer view, I thought must have been purposely erected to give a name to the locality, though subsequent information convinced me that the miserable state of this royal city was the result of its frequent occupation by hordes of rapacious and profligate troops, who drove away all the families that were respectable, and, in their stead, peopled the vacant dwellings with a reckless multitude of the shameless, the dissolute, and the abandoned. A few isolated huts, of a larger size and superior construction, that stood on the brow of the hill, my servants pointed out to me as the future residence of the King and his newly-affianced bride, the daughter of his late

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captive, *Ras Oubie*, of Tigré. The unsightly and forlorn town, abounding with slimy puddles that afforded a luxuriant growth to a rank vegetation, and a number of shaky hovels, where foul and polluting vice held their perpetual carnival, presented a striking contrast to the lovely panorama of green fields, shady groves, lofty mountains and towering rocks by which it was environed. I did not stay in this horrible place longer than was absolutely necessary for a hasty visit to the Governor, a bland debauchee, whose back and purse had already many a time—and that, too, without effecting any improvement—smarted under the lash of his royal master. He was all smiles and compliments; but as I knew how to interpret these, I put an end to the tedious interview by requesting a *baldaraba** to conduct me to *Gaffat*. An athletic young black, one of the Governor's own attendants, was immediately charged with my guardianship, and in the company of this cheerful and lively guide, we trudged on to our destination.

In the march across the plain, where beds of lovely-coloured lilies and scented shrubs grew in the wildest profusion, we passed the isolated estate of a wealthy country gentleman, whose extensive tracts of uncultivated land did not augur well for his thrifty or industrious mode of life. My famished servants, anxious for some refreshment, greatly lauded the *baal beit's*† cheer and hospitality; but I had already had too

* A *baldaraba* is an official intrusted with a traveller's safety, and also occasionally with the supply of his wants.

† Master of the house.

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much experience of Abyssinian generosity and disinterested kindness to deviate from the road for the sake of a hornful of undrinkable beer, and the pressing importunity to repay it by presents of more than a hundredfold its value.

The report that a successor to the assassinated Consul Plowden had arrived, created quite a stir in the little village of *Salamago*, close to *Gaffat*. The begging priests, and their equally mendicant flocks, repaired in a mass to the road to welcome in a becoming style the new *bache boulat;* and I quite sympathized with them in the disappointment they undisguisedly manifested, when the cup of hope, full to the brim with *hydromel*, beads, and all sorts of other good things, was thus cruelly dashed to the ground. Several accompanied me up the hill to *Gaffat*, but the majority skulked to their hovels and behind their trees, quite disgusted with the Frank, his jaded mule, and beggarly retinue.

At *Gaffat*, the residence of the late British Consul,* I expected to find a clean and habitable dwelling, but one glimpse at the interior of the several huts made my heart sink into despondency at the bare prospect of cleansing one of these Augean stables, and making it fit for a temporary domicile. The central one, which had evidently, since Mr. Plowden's departure, served as a

* Mr. Plowden was not recognised in his official capacity by the King, nor is it very likely that the deep prejudice and aversion of his Majesty towards political agents will be removed by the exaggerated representations of consular transactions in Egypt and Syria, which a stray pilgrim now and then imports into the country.

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kind of common stable to passing troops and the neighbouring peasantry's large horned cattle, was at last fixed upon by my servants, and that, too, as they naïvely assured me, for the simple reason that brutes were cleaner than men, and the living concomitants far



more abundant and troublesome in a human abode than in an animal's pen. I silently acquiesced in this arrangement, which I felt sure they would not have suggested without ample experience to justify the proposition.

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CHAPTER VII.

European Visitors—Character of the Abyssinians—Hospitality no Virtue—*Broundo* Feast—Voracious Appetite—Hail-storm—Ascent of the *Guna*—Magnificent Prospect—A Lawless District—A Mohammedan Village—Dangerous Excursion—Speedy Termination—Meeting with the Primate.

THREE days after my arrival at *Gaffat*, I was visited by Messrs. Bender and Kienzlen, two of the six German artisans who were sent to Abyssinia by the Bishop of Jerusalem in the hope that by the introduction of useful trades, and the exhibition of a pure faith, former prejudices against Europeans might be removed, and the King and his nominal Christian subjects become more favourably disposed towards the reception of an unadulterated Gospel, and the efforts of missionaries. The visit of two Europeans in that wild and strange land, where I had not a friend or companion beyond parties of pestering, and importuning native mendicants, was indeed a great relief to my mind, in the utter loneliness and solitude to which, till the arrival of my companion, I should otherwise have been hopelessly doomed. My new acquaintances, who had been more than five years in the country, gave me much useful information about Abyssinia and its population. The King

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they held in high esteem for his probity of sentiment, purity of life, and singleness of purpose; but in reference to his subjects, they certainly could only re-echo what I had from the first day noticed, that they were a false, treacherous, and insolent race—absurdly superstitious in their religious belief, and revoltingly obscene in their domestic relations—insolent to an inferior, and cringing and servile to a superior—at one time declaring that they had entirely departed from the faith of the Gospel, and a minute after contending that their creed had the signet of St. Mark for its authenticity, and the example of wonder-working saints for its inviolable defence;—a nation, in fact, so debased in mind and vitiated in heart, that notwithstanding their physical and intellectual superiority to every other African tribe, they vie with all in truthlessness, cunning, and moral depravity.

My pretended friend, the *Asash* of *Begemeder*, who had been so excessively civil at *Debra Tabor*, entirely forgot the stranger consigned to him by his royal master when at *Gaffat*, and had not Mr. Bell's servant kindly provided us with bread and hydromel, we might, during the festivities of Easter, when nothing is procurable for love or money, have been reduced to short allowance and very low diet. The arrival of the King's *employés*, together with some soldiers and a royal purveyor attached to their establishment, produced an instantaneous change in the conduct of the worthy *Asash*, and before night the land, lately so sterile and unproductive, yielded an abundance of bread, beer, pepper, and other delicacies, not except-

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ing even a *broundo* devoted live cow. The poor beast, decoyed from the browsing herd, lowed mournfully as if conscious of its impending fate. There was some discussion as to its quality and size, and though these were not considered of the strictly orthodox standard, still the majority voted for its immolation in pious deference to the festive solemnities of the week. This decision being unanimously adopted, the unconscious animal was quietly led to a plot of clean grass, where the sacrificial ministers, with their greedy eyes full of delight, awaited their victim. The sturdy quadruped made a desperate effort to escape from its assailants; but its kicks, bounds, and contortions were all in vain, and it fell, sweltering and groaning, on the fatal ground. In a trice, a sharp, glittering blade leaped out of its sheath, and ere the usual formula* had been distinctly pronounced, the dumb beast lay bathed in its own blood. The quivering carcass was at once attacked by a score of hungry savages, and flesh, bones, and even entrails, mangled and torn, hurried to our hut.

Our miserable abode, which, notwithstanding all the rushes and grass that had been strewn over its littered and dirty floor, looked still loathsome enough, was now, from the effluvia of reeking meat, and the larded *shamas* of visitors and servants, rendered absolutely revolting. My powers of endurance, though often tested to the utmost stretch, here entirely failed me, and had not my companions assured me that no

* The meat of all animals is unlawful to an Abyssinian Christian if not slaughtered in the name of the blessed Trinity.

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Abyssinian would venture to eat in the open air for fear of attracting some evil spirit's envious eyes, I would have despatched the guests and their viands beyond the reach of my olfactory nerves. The preparations for the feast being now completed, groups of hungry savages began to crouch around the mounds of raw beef, and, at the word of command from the head servant—the master of the ceremony—each one eagerly fastened a collop or bone between his sharp teeth, and, with a prodigious appetite, munched and swallowed the dainty bit. The charnel-house smell, the loud and grunting noise of the *broundo* eaters' masticating organs, and the fitful light produced by a succession of wax-dipped rags, together with the snoring and hard breathing of the mules in the opposite circle to the festive board, formed a scene of barbarous comfort unique in character and exceedingly strange in taste. For about an hour I watched the gorging process of the insatiable guests; but as their voracity was more elastic than my patience, I threw myself, in perfect despair of seeing the termination of the banquet, on the damp rushes, and under the not over-pleasant lullaby of smacking lips, soon sank into a happy forgetfulness of the country as well as the people amongst whom I was sojourning.

In the morning, when I awoke, my first glance was directed towards the spot where the raw repast had been spread, and where I still expected to behold substantial remains of the preceding night's carousal; but, though I rubbed and strained my doubting eyes, not a vestige of meat was visible, not a single joint

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had escaped demolition. "They have surely not eaten that whole cow?" I interrogatively said to my two visitors. The query did not elicit their surprise; on the contrary, with the greatest gravity they told me that a hungry Abyssinian could swallow down almost incredible quantities of *broundo*. What I subsequently witnessed, and also heard from others, quite convinced me of the truth of Aboona Salama's trite remark, in a conversation about the numerous fasts in his Church. "My people," rejoined the primate to the question addressed to him, "are a gluttonous set, and if they were permitted to indulge in animal food every day, the race of domestic cattle would soon be extinct in the land."

The isolated position of *Gaffat*, the uncertainty of the King's next expedition, and the general dread of a surprise from *Gerat* and his lawless wandering banditti, all these circumstances induced us, on the arrival of our luggage, to decide on proceeding to *Tshatshako*, a distance of about sixty miles further south, where Messrs. Kienzlen and Bender, with a few hundred Gallas, were occupied in making roads. Our resolution being highly approved of by the erratic natives whom I had enlisted in our service, every one sedulously busied himself in hastening the departure. The viatorial condition of the country, which, since the Queen of Sheba's pilgrimage, has evidently undergone no improvement, opposed a serious obstacle to the locomotion of ourselves and baggage over the graceless limbs of the giant *Guna*. Hap-

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pily we had already secured a party of peasants to shoulder our heavy packages, and a requsite number of women to carry the lighter articles, whilst our own male servants were kept in reserve as a corps of relief; and thus furnished with all the necessary means of transport, we spent a few salts in thick, substantial *dallah* to fortify the hungry and thirsty multitude, and then set out on our journey.

A heavy shower of rain, accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning and loud bursts of thunder, without any of the usual premonitory symptoms, most capriciously overtook us during the first half hour's march. Our people, accustomed to such freaks of nature antecedent to their winter, quickly folded up their *shamas*, and, with their nude backs exposed to the pouring torrents, merrily trod the saturated and slippery earth. The ascent up one of the rugged shoulders of the *Guna*, after a day's good toil, severely tested our aching and wearied limbs. We had already clambered an altitude of more than a thousand feet, when we heard a rumbling and rattling noise overhead, and, on looking in the direction of the sound, we saw a hail-storm rapidly drifting towards us. Without an instant's delay, and as if pursued by a foe, all who were unencumbered with burdens bounded, panting and gasping, in the direction of a grove of kosso-trees, which promised a safe retreat. Our porters no sooner saw the race than they also imagined that their gun-proof skulls were in danger from the pelting hail, and, in the

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greatest consternation, they threw down their loads, and scampered after us as fast as their fright and the slippery path allowed them.

The hail, after half an hour's duration, abated, and we could venture, without danger either to head or eyes, to resume again our upland journey. It was a strange spectacle to see the whole country, which a little before was all smiling in vernal bloom, thus suddenly shrouded in a kind of unbleached mantle of wintry white: but Abyssinia is the land of extremes, and rain and sunshine, oppressive heats and chilling blasts, alternate almost regularly during the four months which constitute the winter season.

The ascent increased in wild ruggedness as we advanced. On all sides dark and gloomy precipices obstructed the view and terminated our path. Now we mounted a slippery height, where a false step would have hurled us into ravines of unfathomable depth; now we crept through a rocky cleft, along whose furrowed sides the melting hail leaped in foaming cascades; and now again, with hands and feet firmly fixed in the crumbling soil, we crept cautiously on all fours up a tortuous and shelving pathway, which terminated in a broad meadow or tract of pasture land. Here we found a little village to house our servants whilst we pitched the tent, and on the wet grass, and in a pure and invigorating atmosphere, passed a most comfortable and refreshing night.

Early in the morning, we made an excursion to the highest summit of the *Guna*. The air, when we started, was still raw, cold, and biting; but we anti-

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cipated that the rising sun would soon dispel the sharp frosty atmosphere, and diffuse a genial warmth over the wet and saturated earth. Our expectations were doomed to disappointment, for the bright lord of day had scarcely looked on the quiet creation that awaited his smiling beams when, instead of imparting the usual fresh tinge of the rose to the towering mountains and undulating dells, he tantalized us by wrapping every hollow and hill in a winding-sheet of ghastly death. The steaming vapours unrolled themselves at first in the lower regions, but gradually they rose higher and higher; now encircling with a silvery cestus a huge isolated cliff, and now, again, obscuring the bold outlines of an inaccessible mountain range. We already regretted our expedition, and longed to be ensconced under the snug canopy of our canvas; but as to retreat would have been quite as difficult as to advance, we resolved to defy the chilling, clammy fog in order to accomplish our object. The guides, who were as much at home in the labyrinthine confusion of these alpine heights as in their own sooty huts, carelessly threaded their way through the dense gloom, whilst we, conscious of numberless dangers, were almost afraid to move.

A quivering, rainbow-like gleam was now visible on the western horizon, but its unsteady light kept us for a few minutes in doubt whether to attribute it to lightning, or the piercing beams of the sun's rays. Our gaze, which was intently fixed on that glimmering spot, did not linger long in uncertainty, for a few gusts of wind which came sighing through

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the fissures and clefts of the rocks, burst the heaving vapoury curtain, and unfolded to our enraptured sight a scene indescribably grand and magnificent. There, to the north, rose, in every imaginable shape and form, the mountains of *Bellessa*, from whose hoary summits and sloping declivities hundreds and thousands of bold warriors have often poured down to defend their religion and home against the inroads of pagan *Gallas*, and the assaults of Mohammedan conquerors; westward spread the noble, broad plain of *Dembea*, intersected by numerous groves and villages, with the *Tzana* to protect it towards *Alafa* and *Dagossa*, and a dark belt of indistinct hills for its ramparts on the side where it abuts on *Tschelga* and *Quara*; to the right, and far away in the airy distance, could be traced, in a south-south-westerly direction, the faint outlines of *Godjam*, the land where coffee grows and gold is found, and where the blue Nile, one of the sources of Egypt's fertility, has its rise; whilst a sombre shadowy line along the blue sky in the north-east, defined the chain of rocks and mountains which encircle with an adamantine wall the sacred pilgrim-land of *Lasta*.

I could have loitered here in communion with nature and nature's God for many, many hours, had not the effect of the atmosphere, at this elevation of 14,670 English feet above the level of the Mediterranean, been too oppressive to my lungs; and, unwilling as I felt to move, a suffocating sensation drove me from the rocky and barren summit. The vegetation, which at the highest altitude consisted only of some lichens and heather, 2,000 feet lower down was of a

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rich verdure, enamelled with beds of lovely-coloured lilies and the tapering *jubara*, a species of huge lobelia.

Our descent down the giddy precipices and rounded hills was far more expeditious than the safety of our limbs and bones warranted, but as practice had already made us dexterous adepts in the art of climbing, rolling, and sliding, we accomplished our excursion with no injury beyond a few scratches and the loss of a piece or two of stuff in our dress. A repast of *dillik* and bread was hastily swallowed, and then each one strapped on his burden, and through dark defiles sought his way to the plain of *Zahor*.

The following day we came within an hour's walk of *Tshatshaho*, but as our people were all tired and footsore, we unloaded near a few solitary huts, and in the midst of an amphitheatre of everlasting mountains and castellated rocks that revealed in every fissure and gorge the most sublime and imposing vistas, we determined to spend our Christian Sabbath of rest.

Early on Monday we set out for the *Amba* occupied by the King's European *employés*. The spot being so very near to our last halting-place, we thought that a comfortable morning walk would bring us once more to the home of civilized men; but, owing to the wretched road we had to traverse, it took us several hours' continuous toil to reach the steep and abrupt *Amba* on which they were perched.

This district, which bears all the marks of a fearful volcanic convulsion, was, till the accession of King Theodoros, the infamous abode of the rob-

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ber, and the refuge where housed secure the murderer. *Ras Ali*, the governor of the country, was too weak and also too dissipated to trouble himself in his mud castle at *Debra Tabor* about these ruffians, but no sooner did the present ruler mount the throne than the severest chastisements and the most terrible retribution was inflicted on the lawless miscreants. In the hut of one man alone, I was told, there were found more than fifty skull-caps of monks who had fallen victims to his rapacity and violence, whilst the domiciles and dens of others abounded in equally horrid trophies of their bloody trade. These haunts, formerly so dangerous, are at present remarkably safe; and the traveller who dreads not an adventurous encounter with a leopard or a pack of hyenas which here abound, can traverse the whole of *Tshatshaho* by day or night with perfect impunity. I made several excursions in the neighbourhood, and invariably, both in the Christian and Mohammedan villages, experienced a most kind and cordial reception.

The followers of the Arabian prophet, though not numerous, except in *Gondar*, are still to be found in small bands all over the country. Their principal occupation is traffic; and this they carry on with a shrewdness, tact, and cunning, that have more than once arrested a popular outburst of bigotry against the proscribed unbelievers, and procured them immunity from grievous exactions and perhaps utter spoliation. In the village of which I took the accompanying sketch, there were only a few huts, but their

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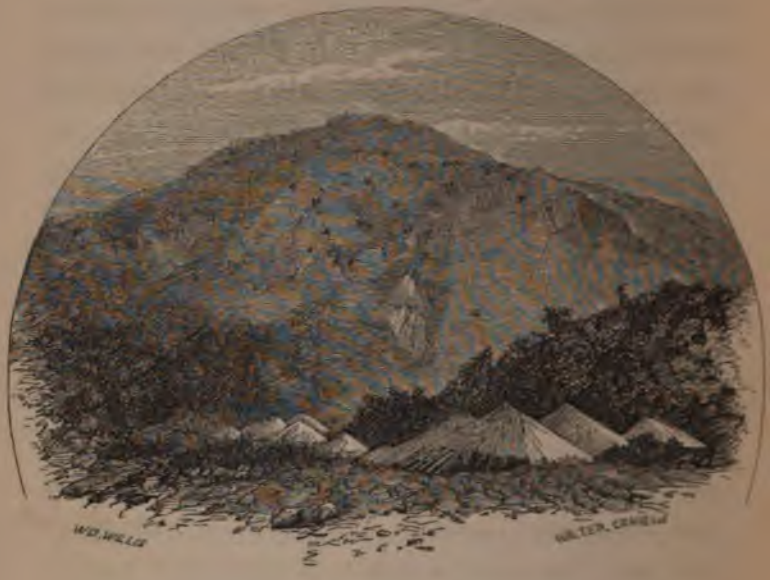
occupants were a very civil set, and quite delighted—an unwonted virtue in this selfish land—to exercise



the most generous hospitality towards their white visitor.

It was now the middle of May, and the period of the rainy season was rapidly approaching. Our tented home on the *Amba*, though pleasant enough during an equatorial summer, did not at all prove an inviting shelter in rainy and stormy weather. Messrs. Bender and Kienzlen, it is true, kindly volunteered to assist me in rearing huts to protect us against those drenching torrents which had already many a night compelled us to sleep several inches deep in water; but as my great

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anxiety was to pay a visit to the *Aboona*, which I knew the swelling rivers between *Tshatshaho* and *Magdala** would ere long render impracticable, I resolved, notwithstanding all unfavourable and intimidating reports, to proceed to that remote spot, and confer personally with the head of the Abyssinian Church on the subject of our Mission.

Our servants—and one is obliged in *Habesh* to keep a good number, as the grinding of wheat, the baking of bread, fetching water, cutting wood, and all other domestic matters must be done by the *baal beit's* establishment—when they heard of my intention, without exception gave notice that they would rather leave our service than accompany me on my journey, where, at every step, they were in danger of falling into the power of *Galla* hordes, who were burning and plundering Daunt and all the other districts round and near *Magdala*. The attractive power of a handsome present at last induced two to yield to my solicitation; and, accompanied by these and a soldier, who had some business at *Magdala*, I set out on my lonely and wearisome expedition.

Our first hour's march, over the rain-saturated plain, was as cheerless as the reveries which occupied my mind; but no sooner did we reach the woody mountains and inhale the cold invigorating morning

* The *Beshilo*, which is the largest river on the road to *Magdala* has its rise in *Yetshu*. In the south of *Daunt* it unites itself with the *Djiddah*, passes by *Amara*, and then empties itself into the *Abai*. The depth of its bed where the traveller in coming from *Tshatshaho* must cross it is 3,500 feet below the level of its rocky banks.

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breeze, than all sad forebodings vanished, and I began to feel quite sure that my journey, instead of terminating, as it had been prognosticated, in a long imprisonment at *Magdala*, or in captivity or else violent death among the *Wollo Galla*, would be of very short duration, and have, with God's blessing, a most successful issue. These lucubrations, as some who have never been placed in a similar position may term them, were entirely occupying my thoughts, when I heard a shrill voice announcing the approach of a great man; and in looking towards the lofty heights, along which our path was winding, I espied numerous groups of soldiers and servants emerging out of the luxuriant trees and bushes; and in coming up to them, they gave us the welcome intelligence that the *Aboona* was in the rear, on his way to *Debra Tabor*, to marry the King to a daughter of *Dejatch Oubie*, the late Governor of *Tigré*.

With trembling anxiety I now gazed towards the smiling landscape to obtain a glimpse of the great Churchman. The steady tramp of mules, and the glimmer of a scarlet-covered episcopal chair, announced the proximity of the procession. I instantly quitted my saddle, and with bared head and deferential obeisance, awaited the holy man's arrival. He was muffled and wrapped up in silk shawls, so that he could scarcely see any object further than his saddle's high pommel; but even when informed of my presence, he merely lifted his silk drapery and gave a glance quite sufficient to chill the blood in my veins. Not at all daunted or irritated

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by this contemptuous salutation, I again mounted my mule, and, without waiting for an invitation, joined the moving cavalcade. Squads of men and women, with a good sprinkling of priests and monks amongst them, at very short intervals, lined the road; but although they prostrated themselves in the dust and dirt before their Primate, it afforded me some satisfaction to perceive that they were not treated with more courtesy than myself. Nearly two hours' march had already been accomplished, and still there was no indication of a halt, and no change in the slow, grave, and dignified motion of the train. I asked several gloomy and sinister-looking priests, when and where their chief would alight; but all that I could elicit from these obtuse, taciturn beings was, *Alokom* ("don't know"). Determined to get rid of all torturing suspense, I rode up to the side of the Aboona's confessor, *Kes Yoseph*, and requested him to procure me an interview. Without deigning a reply, he ambled away, and in a few minutes more the Aboona, the confessor, and myself, were seated under the shady foliage of blossoming euphorbias, and conversing in a familiar and unembarrassed strain. He at first surmised that I had made the mission to the Jews a cover to tamper more insidiously with the belief of the Christians, but my reiterated solemn assurances that our sole aim and desire was to bring the *Falashas* to the knowledge of the Saviour, removed all his suspicions, and elicited his full and unqualified permission to preach and hold assemblies in every *Jewish* settlement throughout his vast diocese.

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The episcopal scrip being well stored with the good things of this life, we had a sumptuous breakfast on the greensward, before starting for our different destinations. On parting, the worthy Prelate urged me to return to *Debra Tabor*, in order to congratulate the King on his auspicious marriage, and also to afford him more frequent opportunity of friendly intercourse. Thus did an overruling and gracious Providence allay all my fears, and remove every obstacle to the free and unimpeded proclamation of the Gospel among the thousands and myriads of perishing *Israelites* in that remote and sin-stained land.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Departure from Tshatshaho — Strolling Minstrels — Royal Nuptials — Objections to Indissoluble Marriages — Royal Banquet—Mendicants—Congratulatory Visit.

THE servants are busy, the mules are saddled, the tent is folded up, and everything indicates a grand movement among the occupants of the *Amba*. Our German officials, clad in aristocratic *shamas*, and mounted on beautiful mules, which gaily paw the ground as if conscious of bearing Imperial saddles and of going to an Imperial wedding, lead the well-regulated body of *shums* and soldiers which constitutes the van, whilst we, borne along on stupid decrepit brutes, bring up the servants and porters, who form the rear. Printing and newspapers being still blessings reserved for Afric's future, our numerous retinue, to satisfy their eager curiosity, pounce upon every wayfarer whom we encounter, and regularly cross-question him about the King, and the festal arrangements in honour of his auspicious nuptials. As we advanced, a party of strolling minstrels, which consisted of a cunning old scamp, a lad, and two young women, on emerging out of a hollow caught sight of us, and, notwithstanding our entreaties, they bawled and shrieked to the

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accompaniment of an antique-shaped lyre, strapped round their leader's shrunken shoulders, in a chorus that certainly did credit to their lungs, though it inflicted a terrible penance on our ears. I would willingly have paid the contribution which these vagrants are licensed to levy on the traveller, had it only procured us immunity from their noise and company; but as I was told that it would be an unpardonable offence to silence those who sang the praises of the King, and the charms of his youthful spouse, we were, in deference to royalty, forced for more than an hour to submit our ears to a most agonizing torture.

On coming nearer *Debra Tabor*, all was animation and activity. The wide tracts of meadow-land, a few weeks before so lonely and desolate, were now dotted with herds of browsing cattle, and the roads, formerly so deserted and untrodden, were thronged by detachments of troops and knots of peasants. I was astonished to see each of the latter carrying one or two unwashed little urchins astride upon their tawny shoulders, as if just returning from a grand exhibition of children; but on inquiring, I learnt that they were devout parents, who had sacrificed a few salts to secure their offspring the episcopal benediction.

In the royal city itself all was gaiety, mirth, and dirt. Men and women, lazy beggars, and loathsome dwarfs, rioted in piggish gluttony and noisome orgies. Our appearance amongst this mixed multitude excited the most intense curiosity; and all, as if prompted

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by one general impulse, fixed their dark staring eyes on us, as if inclined to question our right to come amongst them. We took no notice of this gaping and whispering throng, but slowly and unconcernedly rode up the rugged and narrow path which led to the hut of an acquaintance, where we alighted from our mules, and soon found ourselves in the midst of a respectable and courteous circle of chieftains and officers.

A messenger from the Imperial residence, now summoned us to breakfast, but as I thought that a short doze would be far more refreshing than all the *detch* and *broundo* in the world, I stretched myself on a well-worn *alga*, and to the tingle of the *baal-beits*, mules' bells, sank into a happy sleep. I do not know how long I had indulged in this luxury to the weary, when I felt some one pulling my feet. I thought at first that it was my companion who had dropt off under a tree on the road, but a second more energetic pinch, coupled with something indistinct about *Jane Hoi*, startled me out of my repose. I felt just in a mood to interrogate the intruder about his rudeness, when another fellow, flaunting an aristocratic silken kamees,* came to his assistance, and *nolens volens*, I was led between these two chocolate-coloured athletes to the Imperial banqueting hall, where Mr. Bell and a good number of State dignitaries were busy in demolishing mounds of *teff*, and whole carcasses of fresh-slaugh-

* A silken shirt in *Habesh*, like a knightly order in Europe, is conferred on individuals of distinguished merit, but no one else dare don this luxurious article.

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tered beef. My friend, who had played an important and distinguished part in combating the religious scruples of the royal widower to a second marriage, and in bringing about this new matrimonial alliance, was in the highest glee. During our repast he cursorily narrated to me the business-like courtship of His Ethiopian Majesty.

According to the canons of the Abyssinian Church, the King is bound by the same marital laws as a priest; and, consequently, if his wife dies, he dare not marry another. The bereaved predecessors of Theodoros scrupulously evaded such a contingency by substituting the regularly stored harem in the place of the one lawful wife, but from this disreputable and sinful practice the honourable mind of the present ruler justly shrank, and as he had no inclination to crouch before brainless ecclesiastics, to obtain their license either to break or to obey a divine institution, he took his Bible, and, with the assistance of Mr. Bell, carefully investigated the various passages bearing on the question at issue. The inquiry proving satisfactory to the royal conscience, the faithful and trusty *Lik-a-maquas* was despatched to the Church where the destined Queen and her mother had for several years found a safe asylum against the allurements of vice, and the violence of lawless rebels. Mr. B. himself had to devise the most elaborate plan to protect the bride from the sight of any but female eyes. To do this in a manner so that no malignant and envious tongue should be able to impugn his fidelity to a kind master, he ordered, immediately on

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arriving near the sanctuary, a wide enclosure to be constructed from the tents, of which he had an ample stock. This being done, the bride, swathed and muffled like a mummy, was led by her mother and a bevy of waiting-women within the fence, where, gorgeously caparisoned mules held by slaves stood ready for her and her nearest relatives to mount.

All being again in their saddles, a dozen horsemen rode on in advance to keep the road clear, whilst their leader and the rest waited at a respectful distance till the female cavalcade had filed off, when they also set their steeds in motion and followed in the rear. The etiquette observed on the first day was rigorously maintained throughout the whole journey. At *Debra Tabor*, the happy lady, who was won without being wooed, and got a husband without ever seeing a lover, met from the King and his numerously assembled subjects the most gratifying and enthusiastic reception.

In Abyssinia, where civil marriages have almost superseded the solemn unions of the Church, scarcely one in a hundred will have recourse to a religious ceremony to cement indissolubly the bond between himself and his affianced. A certain agreement by which the husband binds himself to pay a stipulated number of cows and *shamas* to his wife, is all that is requisite; and then they may, perhaps, become attached to each other, and live in peace and conjugal bliss; or, as it frequently happens, they may become disgusted with each other after the lapse of a brief

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period, and separate. During the past few years, many chieftains, in order to please their sovereign, who abhors these licentious alliances, have sought the Church's sacrament to hallow and to confirm their matrimonial vow; and were it not that the ignorant and fanatic priesthood deny this sacred rite to the majority of applicants, conjugal fidelity and hallowed affection would soon supplant gross sensuality and foul vice. The King's civil marriage being attested by a jubilant nation, nothing else was requisite to make it lasting and secure than the holy communion, and this the happy pair received in grand state the week following from the hands of the Aboona, who had been specially summoned from *Magdala* to perform the solemn act.

Our conversation had already lasted a considerable time, and still the appetite of the guests did not appear to flag. An old monk, the chief of the royal *cuisine*, began to get impatient; the royal purveyors glanced despairingly at the insatiable feeders, even the arms of the *broundo*-bearing slaves shook nervously, as if unable to sustain much longer the weight imposed on them; still there was no cessation; the broad knives and crooked swords continued to be energetically plied close to the mouth, to my no small dread lest, in the hurry and eagerness to do justice to the royal board, one or other of the guests should chop off a lip or a nose instead of a morsel of meat or *tepsy*. There being no prospect that the feeding business would soon come to a termination, myself and the few other Europeans present folded our

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shamas around us, and, to the delight of several *baal kamees*, who were sighing to get nearer to the pyramids of *teff* and *gumbos* of *detch*, made our exit.

Close under the crumbling parapet that fenced in the royal premises, hordes of mendicants, clad and unclad, sound and diseased, some smitten with the curse of leprosy, others with virulent scrofula, in promiscuous confusion lay hideously exposed in their own pest-creating atmosphere. On seeing us they all either stretched out their withered hands, or ghoulishly came hobbling near, and in the name of *Kudas Michael*, *Tecla Haimanot*, or some other noted saint, almost forcibly demanded our charity. This mode of soliciting food or alms is in perfect harmony with the beggar's trade, nay a man's Christianity would be suspected were he to reprove the bluster and arrogance of these indolent and often vice-tainted vagrants. The King himself, from motives of mistaken piety, encourages this social bane,—hence, wherever he moves, bands of professional *fakirs* on mules and horses clog his steps and din his ear with their perpetual whine. On the present occasion one of my servants had accidentally a good supply of salts, and these I promptly distributed amongst the most squalid and wretched, who in return bestowed on me their elaborate blessings, whilst those who got nothing muttered their no less ardent and sincere maledictions.

Late at noon we repaired again to the royal residence to attend a grand levee. The usual tumult in and around the Imperial premises was entirely

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hushed; and beggars and peasants, chieftains and their vassals, all with the *shama* girded round the waist, either noiselessly crept about to execute certain orders, or with hands clasped across their denuded chests, stood expectant of some command.

His Majesty—who sat, in most unkingly style, on the loose uncemented stones of a dilapidated wall that overhung a dizzy dell, where thousands of veteran warriors, in heaving and surging masses, were congregated together—immediately, on hearing that we had come to pay our respects, turned towards us, and, in a clear, ringing voice said, "My children, you are welcome." This brief salutation, which really expressed more than all those pathetic and farcical compliments, in which Abyssinians at every meeting indulge, was followed by some inquiries about Europe and the nations beyond Jerusalem. I told his Majesty that it was customary in our country to congratulate those who entered into the happy bond of matrimony, and that we gladly availed ourselves of our national practice to present to him our unfeigned wishes and prayers on the auspicious event, which had caused such universal and sincere joy throughout his Empire. "My people," he quickly replied, "are bad; they love rebellion and hate peace; delight in idleness, and are averse to industry; but, if God continues to me my life," added he with glowing ardour, "I will eradicate all that is bad, and introduce all that is salutary and good." We spontaneously breathed our "Amen" to this hopeful prophecy of a man, who certainly has the will and inclination to raise his

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country from its present moral, social, and religious degradation, though unfortunately his defective education, uncontrollable ambition, and hasty temper, must all undergo a severe discipline, ere he can prove himself—as his flatterers pretend—worthy of the title and noble achievements which are to inaugurate, according to an old legend, the golden reign of the great *Theodoros*. On retiring he ordered that two cows should be given to each of us, and also that a large tent should be pitched for our accommodation in the vicinity of his residence.

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CHAPTER IX.

Dispensation of Justice—*Fetha Negest*—Reform of the Criminal Code—Punishment of Traitors—Predilection for the Freebooters' Trade—Criminal Jurisprudence—Places of Refuge—Ecclesiastical Court—Priests in Chains—Prelatical Power.

THE grey streaks on the eastern horizon were just dispersing the dusky mists of dawn; the hyenas were hurrying to their thickets and dens to enjoy repose, after their saturnalia amongst piles of bones and offal, provided by a feasting army; the shepherds and priests, usually so annoying with their grating and tedious inquiries about one or another belonging to their flocks, were either silently pursuing their respective vocations, or, in deference to Royalty, indulging in an extra hour of slumber; everything, in fact, the coolness of the atmosphere, the stillness of the scene, the heavy weights on the eyelids, all conspired to make me hug the greasy coverlet and hard couch, when suddenly piercing shrieks and yells, from the direction of the Imperial residence, broke startlingly on my ears. I listened for some time; but, as every minute the groans and cries of agony rung more and more dismally from rock and hill, I soon left the tent

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and proceeded towards the spot from whence the screams proceeded. The cracking of the formidable giraffe,* and the supplications for mercy, which I could now distinctly hear, warned me that the monarch was up and administering justice. Actuated by curiosity, I stealthily took my position behind a prickly shrub, and from this unobserved retreat I saw about a dozen figures, each with his arms so tightly pinioned that the blood almost spirted out of the trembling fingers, whilst on each side stood a soldier to support the hapless culprit during the executioner's ruthless task. At every stroke of the lash, the poor wretches uttered the most heartrending moans; but neither the wail of distress, nor the lacerated and bleeding backs of the victims, inspired any commiseration, or mitigated the severity of their punishment. My eyes involuntarily turned from this appalling sight, whilst my heart breathed the fervid prayer that the Gospel of love might ere long reform the cruel laws which at present rule the inhabitants of this country.

Although in Abyssinia justice is regulated by the *Fetha Negest* code of laws, to which tradition assigns a heavenly origin, yet every judge may, in all cases except murder and sacrilege, exercise his own discretion in punishing the guilty, and in acquitting the innocent. The King, who constitutes the final court of appeal, has the right to annul any previous

* The giraffe is a whip, about five feet long, cut out of the hide of the hippopotamus.

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verdict. Nay, if the venality of the administrator of the law can be clearly established, the fine of the delinquent is frequently in proportionate magnitude imposed on the judge. Unhappily, in this depraved country, the passion for litigation has so entwined itself around the nation's heart, that a monarch, who is anxious to check corruption and to render the law protective to the meanest as well as the proudest of his subjects, must take the balance of justice into his own firm hand; for if he delegates this authority to a counsellor or chief, he may be sure that the functionary will abuse that power to gratify his avarice, and to enhance his own importance. King Theodoros is so fully aware of this, that, notwithstanding his multifarious engagements, he regards it as a solemn religious duty to devote, almost daily, several hours to the swarms of plaintiffs and defendants who, in the city and also in the camp, assail his ears with the monotonous wail "Justice, *Jane hoi!* Justice, *Jane hoi!*"

The penalties attached to the various crimes in benighted *Habesh* are as incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel, as their creed is at variance with the ennobling and sanctifying principles of Christianity. Many of the inhuman exhibitions, which were formerly of daily occurrence, have of late, it is true, been entirely abolished; but whilst the searing iron, the crooked ripping knife, and the disgusting impaling stake are out of use, the hangman and executioner are still ever busy at their grim and brutalizing trade. The most severe and rigorous punishment is inflicted

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on rebels and traitors; and, whatever the rank or station of the person may be who is found guilty of this flagrant crime, no intercession and no plea can save him from mutilation and death.

During the nuptial festival, intelligence reached the King that a chief in *Agaumeder* had thrown off his allegiance and seduced from their fealty a detachment of troops. This treachery, at the very period when the nation professed to rejoice in his domestic bliss, roused the fiery passions of the despot, and many thousands of soldiers were instantly despatched to quell the insurrection, in the blood of the perfidious rebels. On another occasion a plot, in which nine of the most powerful chieftains of the land were implicated, accidentally came to the knowledge of the autocrat. The conspirators promptly received a summons to attend a Council, and promptly they hastened to obey the royal command. The compressed lip and knitted brow of the monarch made them retreat to the door, but egress was already barred by the sentinels of death, and the shout for rescue was either unnoticed by their hosts of cowering retainers, or drowned in the clang of the mutilating knife, and the gruff voice of the executioner. To strike terror into the hearts of their adherents, the misguided men, after undergoing the amputation of both legs and hands, were gibbeted on a tree in the public market-place at Gondar, and there for six months their ghastly *cadavres* attracted the carrion-hunting vultures, and impregnated with a pestilential poison the mountain air. The blackened carcasses of the confederate delin-

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quents were still exposed to the loathing gaze, when a *Begemeder* noble, incited by lust of rapine and plunder, disclaimed all allegiance, and aided by bands of desperadoes, spread terror and desolation through peaceable districts.

A loyal party of peasants leagued themselves together against the disturber of their peace and the ravager of their hearths, and, in a bloody fight that ensued, the miscreant and his innocent wife were both captured, and in boisterous triumph led, gagged and manacled, to the despot's feet. The poor woman, who had her hair braided in a style above her rank, was immediately consigned to some unfeeling soldiers, and ruthlessly shorn of raven locks that had once been the envy of her sex, but were now the cause of her degradation, and the theme of many a bitter and harassing taunt. Her husband met no such indulgence. He had revolted against the King, and endeavoured to excite sedition among his subjects, and a cruel lingering death on a slow fire alone was deemed sufficient to atone for the enormity of this flagrant crime.

The King's relentless severity towards rebels and traitors does not, however, in the least damp the aspiration for power, or the passion for dominion. Men and women are continually scourged and mutilated; whole legions of wild hordes are sent to desolate and lay waste suspected and disaffected districts; whole clans are proscribed and outlawed; and yet all these extreme measures and sanguinary edicts fail to enforce obedience, or to win the nation's fealty. On October 31, 1860, three thousand rebels, with their

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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. This severe retaliation did not, however, dispose the *Tigré* usurper, *Agou Negousee*, to listen to the overtures of peace till, a month later, a similar fate rewarded his ingratitude to a Sovereign who had given him liberty when a captive, and assistance when in want.

Theft and murder have been more successfully suppressed during the present reign than revolt; and bands of freebooters are now as rarely seen in the highlands of Abyssinia as in the best regulated states of Europe. In a picturesque rural village, close to the glassy *Tzana* lake, there resided for many years a fierce lawless community of brigands, who pursued their illicit traffic with an ardour and zeal worthy of an honest and respectable vocation. The imperial troops being more frequently in the vicinity than the bravoes thought convenient, a deputation was despatched to lodge a formal complaint before the Sovereign against this unjustifiable intrusion on their domain. The boldness of the ruffians disarmed the King's wrath, and, in the blandest tones, he besought them to resign the robber's lance for the ploughman's whip. At first they felt inclined to yield, particularly as each one was to receive a team of bullocks and several cows; but the change from bandit to peasant life did not suit the taste of these roving gentry, and

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they gravely assured his Majesty they could not consistently abandon a profession which had from time immemorial been openly pursued, without let or hinderance, by their clan. The King, finding that he had to deal with incorrigible ruffians, coolly told them that if this was the unanimous decision of their partisans, they must all appear before him in person, and strictly define the limits of the territory over which they intended to roam. This request did not in the least stagger their confidence or awaken suspicion in their hearts. They had defied *Ras Ali*, and their prowess, they also thought, had intimidated *Negoos Theodoros*; but, to their surprise, on presenting themselves a few days afterwards in a strong armed band, they found, instead of a good-humoured monarch, a stern judge; and instead of civil courtiers, a formidable line of troops to lead them to execution.

Murder, that most heinous of all offences, by a strange perversion of the Mosaic law, is but seldom capitally punished. According to the Abyssinian code of justice, a man, whether guilty of manslaughter or wilful murder, has forfeited his life, and must either pay a ransom, which varies from 50 to 250 Maria Theresa dollars,* or suffer the extreme penalty of his crime. This peremptory mode of vengeance amongst a vindictive and cruel race has so often created deadly feuds, and caused the wanton effusion of innocent blood, that the King abolished the privilege of arbitrary

* If the murderer does not possess the requisite amount, he is chained to a relation of the deceased, and obliged to beg till he has collected the stipulated sum.

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retributive vengeance, and wisely enacted that both parties should be arraigned before him, in order that a judicial investigation might precede the final sentence.

In most cases, however, the murderer may elude the violent rage of his pursuers by taking refuge in a church, where the priests will negotiate the price of his release, or, if he is sufficiently alert, he may retire to another province, and in perfect security repent his guilty deed. The boundaries which, in imitation of the "cities of refuge," the avenger of blood dare not pass with hostile intent are well defined by the *Taccazy* between *Tigré* and *Amhara*, and the *Abai* between *Shoa* and *Godjam;* but should the attainted exile grow impatient in his foreign home, and, in the illusive hope that time has obliterated the remembrance of his guilt, revisit the land of his birth, inevitable death will assuredly be his lot.

An instance of this kind occurred not long ago. A man in *Godjam* quarrelled with a neighbour, and deliberately killed him. The *Abai* being near, he plunged into the river, and crossed over to *Amhara*. Sixteen years he remained in the land of his adoption, enjoying quiet and undisturbed seclusion. The lapse of this long period, and the removal of several of his bitterest foes, allayed his apprehension of detection, and in an evil hour he recrossed the deep waters, and, over roads untrodden by travellers, hastened to embrace once more the friends and kindred dear to his heart. Already he beheld the hut which had sheltered him in former days; already he heard voices

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that sounded like sweet music on his ear; already he was clasped to the breast that had pillowed him in happy infancy, when, unperceived, the avenger stole to his side, and dragged him, amidst the lamentations of mother and sisters, to a murderer's doom.

From these fierce and implacable *Godjamees*, it is grateful to turn to an example where mercy was extended to the guilty, and yet no violence done to the vindictive law of native justice. A detachment of troops, on their march through *Begemeder*, were quartered one night on the inhabitants of *Gaint*. The peasants, not much pleased at having to entertain these hungry guests, offered them but niggardly fare. A brawl ensued, and in the confusion an unlucky rustic lost his life. The relatives without delay hastened to lodge a complaint before the King. It being evident that their own conduct had provoked the fatal catastrophe, the brief sentence was, "Peasants provide, and soldiers eat." The plaintiffs did not admit the justice of the verdict; but the King sharply replied, "If you are not satisfied with my decision, and insist on blood, you must either kill me, the father of every soldier, or accept a ransom." All applauded the magnanimity of the Sovereign; and for several months the hereditary wisdom of the descendant of Solomon was deservedly eulogized through the length and breadth of the land.

Not to weary the reader with the knotty topic of Abyssinian jurisprudence, I return to my tent to sip a cup of bitter coffee, which *Nazar*, my Arab lad, under

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many invocations of the prophet's wrath on the dark, unsainted *Kafirs*, had concocted.

About noon, when the King was, as usual, holding his levee on the sunny wall, and the courtiers and governors, who worried us with their visits, were attending to their respective posts, I enveloped my head in the white priestly turban, and to avoid the throng, proceeded along the outskirts of the town to the residence of the Aboona. His Grace's palace, a conically-shaped Egyptian tent, was, from motives of policy, situated on an undulating verdant sward, near enough to be seen, but not near enough to allow the occupants of the imperial domiciles to scrutinize their Metropolitan's doings. The genuine simplicity of this apostolic abode made me almost sigh a *peccavi* at the recollection of my former uncharitable suspicions about prelatical pride and hauteur; but a closer glance at the gaudy-coloured sanctum, and the scores of prostrate priests at its entrance, dissipated all such squeamish qualms, and, to the satisfaction of my grinning servant, who, no doubt, thought that I was treading on holy ground with a prayer on my lips, I unconsciously said aloud, "Ah! enthrone a bishop in Africa, or enthrone him in Europe, if Christ is not his ensample, and the Spirit his teacher, he will practically villify that very truth which he professes to uphold."

There were at least five or six hundred Churchmen squatted on the large open space in front of the tent, waiting for an interview with their ecclesiastical chief. Their appearance, though grave and solemn, lacked dignity and intellect, that true im-

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press of the Gospel mission. The rigid features and inanimate eyes, partly muffled in cumbrous *shamas*, and partly shaded by voluminous white turbans, were, by some inexplicable law of attraction, uniformly bent upon that humble canvas screen which sparkled and shone under the sportive rays of the noonday sun.

About a dozen gay and smiling pairs of priests shackled in rusty fetters, as if proud of their distinction, in singular contrast to their sombre and immobile co-workmen, strutted on the velvet turf, with steps apparently regulated by the music of their not very creditable chains. Now manacled gangs were by no means unfamiliar to me who had been residing near the arsenal of the Grand Turk, and was at that very time moving in the courtly atmosphere of *Negoos Theodoros*, but then almost every one of those blear-eyed incorrigible vagabonds had the tale of his life written in letters of fire on his villanous countenance; whilst these ironed priests wore neither the meek look of guilty penitents, nor exhibited the most honourable badges to clerical preferment. Absorbed in the puzzling conjecture as to the nature of the chains which these reverend gentlemen so ostentatiously paraded, I abstractedly walked on, and was already in the presence of the great Aboona, when, to my confusion, I became aware of the ugly fact that I had not been announced. I quickly apologized in the best language I could command; but his Grace in most urbane terms assured me that the etiquette, indispensable in receiving strangers, was never enforced at the visits of

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friends. This condescending reception broke the ice of formality, and in a lively and interesting strain we were discussing on topics of heterodoxy and themes of orthodoxy; on the priests of *Shoa*, who eschew truth, and with their ever faithful dagger maintain error; on the *Godjamees*, who profess Christianity, and yet sadly stick to Pagan vagaries and *Falasha* superstitions; in fact, our conversation might have smoothly run on till dewy eve, had not the declining shadow—the indicator of time's flight in primitive Ethiopia—struck life into those crouching statues, and unstrung the tongues of those taciturn heads. "*Aboonà ye moot!*" "May the Aboona die." A solemn and flattering oath, in varied cadences, from the deep bass to the shrill soprano, resounded from the throats of a band of prostrate and cringing ecclesiastics, and was reproduced in all its mellifluous native accent by the ever-faithful echo. Such an adjuration even an Aboona could not resist, and, comfortably ensconced on his cushioned *alga*, with a black silk covering over his august head down to his genuine Coptic nose, he had to endure the dreadful bore of listening to all sorts of plaints, from the consecration of a *tabot* to the exorcising of a *bouda*; and from a breach of ecclesiastical discipline, to the ignominious seizure of a poor parishioner's useful donkey.

The heterogeneous mass of subjects submitted to the prelate's decision, might have perplexed the most acute judgment and shrewd intellect, but twenty-two years' constant practice had sharpened his Grace's

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judicial perceptions; and, in a masterly manner, the abstruse subtilties of polemics were unravelled, and the refractory conduct of the contumacious promptly chastised. One party being dismissed, another was about to advance, when they were peremptorily ordered to stand back till the charges against the *Abadies*, or fathers in chains, had been satisfactorily settled.

A glow of indignation overspread the calm and placid features of the Prelate as those worthies were introduced, and, quite unlike the other evildoers, they were addressed in a tone that caused their swarthy cheeks to grow pale, and their whole frame feverishly to throb. The withering sarcasm of their chief pastor's impassioned salutation, inclined me to believe that these cowering and crouching figures, an hour before so haughty, and now so crestfallen, must be horrid criminals and irreclaimable offenders: but it was not so. Their reverences, as I soon understood, had neither robbed churches nor scandalized their caste by unlawful practices, as others in that white-clad company had done; but they were guilty of that which, in the Prelatical balances, far outweighed every other sacerdotal failing, —they had pertinaciously clung to the abolished dogma of the three births of Christ—on which I shall have something to say in its proper place,—and they had also arrogantly absolved certain priests whom his Grace had found it necessary to excommunicate. The poor men, writhing under the fear of the impending verdict, pathetically appealed to the

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Aboona's clemency; and, no doubt, their penitential contrition mitigated the severity of the sentence, which, though lenient, consisted of several months' successive fasts, divers fines, and the promise of the giraffe; besides the pleasing prospect that a repetition of the offence might involve banishment from the realm, and the amputation of a leg or the loss of an arm.

Now, in Abyssinia, where the spiritual authority of the Church is controlled by the secular power of the Crown, the metropolitan legally cannot inflict corporal punishment; but as every priest knows that in matters of faith, and particularly on questions relating to the disputed tenet of our Lord's birth, the King zealously supports the *Aboona*, very few, unless their lives are in danger, would submit their religious differences to the secular rather than to the spiritual tribunal.

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CHAPTER X.

Termination of the Nuptial Festivities—Royal Contempt for the Priesthood—Uncomfortable Quarters—Choice of Residence—Liberal Landlord—Accession to our Circle—Aquatic Exercise—Tropical Rains—*Ras Oubie*—Medical Treatment—*Aliga Salasee*—Retribution on the *Wollos*—Fate of Captives—Gloomy Foreboding Verified—Audience at Jan Meeda—Ill-temper of the Despot.

The Imperial nuptials having been duly honoured by the slaughter of hecatombs of bullocks, and the draining of countless *gumbos* of potent hydromel, his Majesty put an end to the revel, and abruptly ordered his troops to march on to the *Beshilo*.

We were still speculating on the probable scene of operation, when a courtier brought the royal commands that all the Franks should repair to the palace. "My children," said his Majesty on seeing us, "I am going to leave *Debra Tabor* for awhile. The Aboona, *Ras Engeda* and others (which obscurely meant the Queen) whose weal is my care, will remain till I return. You have come from a distant land to do good to my people, and to aid me in improving the country over which God has appointed me to rule. I am sensible of your kindness, and appreciate the purity of your motives. Those who wish to remain

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the *Ras* will take under his charge, and those who prefer to leave can do so with my full approbation." Messrs. Bender and Kienzlen accepted the latter proposition, and retraced their way back to *Tshatshako*, whither Mr. Bronkhorst volunteered to accompany them, in order to fetch the rest of our luggage, whilst myself and two other Europeans in the royal service thought it better to brave the now almost diurnal storms on the hills of *Debra Tabor*, rather than on the wide and unprotected savanna in the royal camp.

At noon, a noisy procession of priests clad in gaudy finerics of patched silks, and redolent of the odours of rancid butter and fetid lard, took their stand on the highway, and, in anticipation of the royal *cortége*, unmercifully exerted their cracked and jarring throats in chanting the Psalms and hymns of the Church. The King, though ardently attached to his Church, has no sympathy with her ignorant and lazy priests, and whenever an opportunity offers itself he manifests his feeling towards them either in sharp rebukes or silent disdain. This he openly enough showed in passing the chanting and incense-waving groups who lined the road; for, although they bawled and shouted in a deafening chorus, the Imperial cavalcade cantered on with an indifference that was nothing less than heretical.

The storms, hitherto intermittent, now assumed a more settled and disagreeable regularity. My humble tent, that had creditably resisted the pelting of the wind and rain during many a terrific and angry tempest, began to show symptoms of decay; and,

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although myself and servants invented the most ingenious contrivances to render it proof against hail and rain, yet all our toil was in vain; and every night, for many weary hours, we were compelled to stand sentinel near its creaking and bending pole, and its loose and flapping sides. To increase our misfortune, the uneven ground, overgrown by monstrous nettles and prickly shrubs, that had for some days served as an effectual trench round its walls, at length proved too weak an embankment, and the muddy, pent-up waters freely oozed through the tangled weeds into the well-trodden and shallow area of my abode, where they formed a miniature artificial lake.

In this emergency my servants suggested that, like the other two Franks, I should apply to the *Ras* for a hut, but as I was not a King's *employé*, nay, invariably disclaimed an honour not much calculated to enhance the object of our Mission, I sent my people into the town either to hire or to purchase a domicile. Their research was successful beyond expectation. There were houses, small and large, old and new, dirty and clean, at the disposal of the demented Frank, who sought to procure for money what he might obtain without payment. Anxious to inspect this multifarious variety of residences, I picked my way along stagnant ponds and through treacherous mud, to the localities my prating domestics considered best adapted to suit the strange fancy of an ungreased Frank. The first house we entered differed from the generality of the dwellings in that it had sufficient

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light to reveal a bulging, unsafe roof of foul, mouldy straw, and a soft floor covered to the depth of at least a foot by steaming and decomposing refuse; the second, though paved in the centre, and liberally patched with mud and dung, sheltered in its impenetrable gloom too formidable an entomological Pandemonium to be safely encountered by a white man's flesh and blood; the third, in defiance of its sty-like appearance and pestiferous odours, I should still have tried to cleanse of all its accumulated abomination, but that the harpy of a landlord, besides two dollars rent, nearly double its value, impudently bargained that if he accepted such a trifle it would only be on condition that I and my mule should occupy one half of the premises, and he and his children and grandchildren the other. To this joint occupation I had an invincible repugnance, and no thunder and storm could induce me to exchange the quiet wet tent for the filthy crowded hut.

Three of the small German colony, who had been confined in the *Amba Magdala*, the King, on his march to the *Wollo* country, liberated from their rocky home, and sent to establish themselves at *Gaffat*, on the hill formerly occupied by Mr. Plowden. Mr. Flad, one of this little exiled band, together with his partner, a well educated and self-denying deaconess from Dr. Fliedner's excellent institute at Kaiserswerth were quite an acquisition to our circle. This worthy couple, true to their high and holy vocation, in the midst of many trials, discouragements, and privations, have, during the last six years, unweariedly laboured to disseminate God's Word, both among the

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garrison at *Magdala*, and the peasants who, from all parts of Abyssinia, periodically supply the fort with provisions. Their efforts, though not cheered by much success, have not been altogether in vain. They have circulated hundreds of copies of the Scriptures, instructed numbers of Pagans and *Amharas* in the great truths of salvation, and both by example and precept, by relieving the sick, and by affectionate and persuasive entreaties addressed to the healthy, have been wonderfully successful in removing much of native prejudice, and in scattering far and wide the seed of the everlasting Gospel.

The fresh arrivals being amply provided with saws, axes, spades, and all kinds of implements for building a dwelling in the wilderness, we set to work, and in a few days had a neat hut in the rear of our friend's premises. It was quite a luxury, after the continual exposure to wet and dirt, wind and storm, to sit under a decently thatched shelter, and to watch from the snug retreat the daily floods which, with almost undeviating regularity inundated the land.

Our mornings, which were generally clear and sunny, we devoted to visits or excursions down the *Erib*, where the eddying and turbulent waters, hemmed in by wooded mountains and high grassy banks, formed the most lovely spot for aquatic exercise. The natives, who believe rivers and lakes to be the resort of evil spirits, ominously shook their heads at these dangerous amusements, which they every day anticipated would terminate in the mutilation and death of one or more of the sceptical Franks; but on finding that neither *ghouls*, *efrets*, or *nedalits*

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tore our limbs, or diminished our number, they caught the hydromania, and, for hours in succession, would lave and scrub their larded skins in the foaming and noisy stream.

After midday the boom of the distant thunder, like the signal guns of a ship in distress, at measured intervals, resounded through the air. The light clouds hanging motionless in the serene heavens, began to melt into sterner hues; the air, balmy and refreshing half an hour before, became sulphurous and hazy, the sun disappeared behind a dark impenetrable curtain, the wind howled, the trees bent and creaked, and everything above and beneath—the crash of the thunder, the lurid glare of the lightning, and the melancholy moan of the wind—all combined to impart awe and terror to the scene. A distant hissing noise, like the discharge of a number of rockets, gradually grew more and more distinct, and ere the reed door of the hut could be securely fastened, and a few extra hides be applied to the interstices that answered the purpose of windows and chimneys, the flood-gates were opened, and the rain poured down in overwhelming torrents.

The storm sometimes lasted the whole night, though generally its fury subsided after three or four hours duration, and then again, as by the fiat of the Almighty, the heavy clouds used to disperse, the fountains of heaven were closed, the sun broke forth, the birds began to sing, and the tempest's violence would almost have been forgotten, had it not been for the foaming torrents and tumbling cataracts, the deluged plain and uprooted trees, the torn homestead and

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scattered, if not drowned, flock, and many other visible traces of its devastating career, which reminded one of dangers already past, and dangers still to be encountered during the successive days of a long tropical winter.

Ras Oubie, formerly the ruler of *Tigré*, and subsequently the prisoner of King *Theodoros*, but at present the father-in-law and vassal of the conqueror, being near *Debra Tabor*, we thought it advisable to pay him a visit. On our entrance into his hut we found the old man reclining on an *alga*, attended by two Abyssinians, who, as he had taken a strong dose of *kosso*, were busy in administering to their exalted patient the usual tonic of spiced butter, which they most profusely rubbed on his sunken chest and thin skeleton arms. The haggard look and cadaverous countenance of this once redoutable chief, told the sad tale of his dissolute life whilst a ruler, and of his keen sufferings whilst a captive. Our appearance for a few minutes put a stop to the manipulations of the two leeches; but the worn-out invalid, in a petulant and irritable tone of voice, signified his impatience at the interruption. The obsequious and sweltering dabblers in the healing art, promptly obeyed the behest, and handful after handful of the aromatic butter and lard came pattering on his worn-out form, till the poor man was regularly encased in a thick stratum of dirty fat. To us he spoke not a word; a disappointment I did not regret, as we could more freely converse with his *abadie* or father, *Aliga Salasee*. This worthy, who is an Abyssinian Church dignitary, at one time professed to have a favourable disposition

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towards Protestantism, but, on the arrival of the Jesuits, he changed sides and drifted into Romanism, and at present, notwithstanding his pretended attachment to the creed of the *Aboona*, he is, I believe, wandering about on the confines of scepticism and infidelity.

The *Aliga*, who is certainly one of the most noble and dignified-looking ecclesiastics in the country, some years ago accompanied *Monsignor de Jacobis*, the head of the Jesuit Mission, on a visit to Italy. He was evidently chosen for that purpose on account of his personal advantages and imposing appearance; but if the thoughtful countenance, symmetrical figure, and intelligent expression of the dark-coloured priest enlisted the warm sympathy and generous benevolence of the faithful at Rome, in behalf of his country, the visit did not in the least benefit him, nor enhance the usefulness and stability of the mission which had so generously befriended him. Amongst other questions, he asked how I liked Abyssinia, and, to his surprise, I bluntly replied, "God has given you a fine country and a rich soil; but alas! you still want that precious boon—a grateful heart."

The King's return from a successful expedition against the *Wollo Gallas*, who had for several months been carrying ruin and desolation into all the districts east of the *Beshilo*, created universal joy. In conformity with Abyssinian etiquette, we repaired to the court to congratulate the autocrat on his safe return from a toilsome and dangerous campaign. He was, as usual, communicative, and frankly told us that the inclemency of the weather, the depth of the rivers,

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and the lances of the *Gallas* had cost him a good number of troops; but, as he had captured six thousand women and children, forty thousand sheep and oxen, and horses and mules in proportion, he thought the death of his own troops amply revenged on the hated Mohammedans. Many of the poor captives were left at *Magdala*, whilst the rest, and particularly the adults, were distributed amongst the most deserving of the officers and chiefs.

The lot of these miserable victims of savage war and untamed passion, although they have escaped a violent and cruel death, is still most painful and dreary. Torn from a happy home, and severed from every tender tie, the despairing prisoners are hurried into a remote and distant exile, where they are either indiscriminately distributed amongst the most distinguished warriors, or consigned to notable governors and favoured functionaries. The traffic in slaves was abolished throughout Abyssinia on the succession of King *Theodoros* to power; but within the last year, the despot, from spite to the French, who were reported to have landed an invading army on the coast, in order to re-establish the expelled Jesuits, rescinded the law; and the abominable trade, after the long check, is now again flourishing more than ever. Some slaves occasionally rise to dignity and rank; but the majority, and especially the females, despite their passive reception of the rite of baptism, are detested on account of their infidel descent, and, if not endowed with bewitching charms, are subjected to a hard and bitter existence. I saw several groups of

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these desolate beings, and it was truly a melting spectacle to behold infancy and youth, health and beauty, at the very budding time of life, doomed to blighted hopes and perpetual servitude. They all seemed to feel their melancholy position; and though no groan or sigh escaped their lips, yet the heaving of the breast, and the sorrowful gaze of the dark eye, touchingly spoke of silent grief and ineffable anguish.

Hail and rain, as well as the fatigues and toil of the *Galla* campaign induced the King to take a few days' rest on the beautiful plain of *Jan Meeda*, near *Debra Tabor*. The camp being near *Gaffat*, I invited Mr. Bell to attend the service which I had organized for the benefit of the few Europeans on our lonely hill. He readily assented to my proposition, and on the following Lord's-day was with us for several hours. More than twenty years had elapsed since he last joined in the prayers of the Church or listened to an exposition of the Gospel from a Protestant minister's lips. The solemnity of the service, and the pathetic and thrilling appeals of the sacred volume to which he had so long been almost a stranger, evoked sad recollections and bitter memories of a life without a saving faith, and the anticipation of a future felicity without the recognition of a crucified Redeemer. The next day, in a letter to Mr. Flad, he expressed his unfeigned gratification at having spent the Sunday under our roof, and at the same time, in an earnest strain, requested him to become the guardian and executor of his will should the next battle-field terminate his career. These gloomy forebodings proved but too true, for in a fight

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between *Gerat* and the King, which took place three months later, this brave and kind-hearted man, to the regret of a whole nation, nobly fell in defending the life of his Sovereign and friend.

A vague rumour that the rebel force under *Gerat* and *Tesamma* was moving from *Woggera* towards *Dembea*, set the imperial army, after a week's rest, again in motion. Before the breaking up of the camp, we repaired once more to *Jan Meeda* for an interview with the King.

On our way we passed *Magara Miriam*, a church



perched on the brow of a lofty hill. The little edifice,

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faintly visible through the massive foliage, had more the appearance of a weary monk's hermitage than a place of Christian worship. The wail-like chants of the morning service, which rose in the air far above us as we rode along, produced a startling and not unpleasing effect. Our more devout servants instantly prostrated themselves, and, in superstitious veneration for the sacred shrine, kissed the ground; but those who had already imbibed some better ideas ridiculed a piety so convenient, as they expressed it, to lazy people.

In the camp, notwithstanding the chilliness and cold of the early hour, we found the King already up, and actively engaged in dictating despatches to the half-naked, shivering scribes, and in giving orders to the no less courtly attired commanders of his troops. In deference to the white visitors, and to the satisfaction of the chilled officials, business was for a brief interval suspended. His Majesty asked us a variety of questions about Europe, its divisions, creeds, armies, and warfare. He was quite surprised to hear that in Christian countries prisoners of war were generously treated, and women and children, youth and innocence, exempt from all its penalties. "You are," he replied, "superior to us in all things; and, if God permits, I shall soon send an embassy to England to open the eyes of at least a few of my people." At the close of our audience we adjourned to the royal tent, where a sumptuous breakfast of *broundo*, *shiro*, *hydromel*, and a variety of other delicate peppery condiments had been provided for the favoured

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Franks. Subsequently, as an additional mark of distinction, each one received six cows and several *gumbos* of honey, which, for aught we knew, though courtesy forbade the inquiry, were once owned by the incorrigible *Wollo*.

At noon the King and his staff quitted *Jan Meeda*. As usual, crowds of petitioners and mendicants lined the road along which the royal *cortége* was to pass. But evil tidings had ruffled the despot's temper, and the luckless suppliants, contrary to all precedent, were made to atone for their discordant clamour of *Janehoi* by a sound application of the never-missing giraffe. Two Arabs who had been sent on an errand to the King by "*Nimmer*"—the lowland chief already adverted to, in their eagerness to prefer the object of their mission, forgot to uncover themselves to the waist, and, to their horror, instead of a gracious reply, half-a-dozen pairs of stout arms gave them an impressive lesson on court etiquette. Similar acts of discipline were indiscriminately administered to all, no matter whether high or low, strangers or natives, who had the misfortune to cross the path of the irritated Monarch.

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CHAPTER XI.

Diseases—The *Teenia*—Antidote—The *Bouda*—His Power—Mode of Exorcism—Revolting Taste—Fatal Effects—Torments of the *Zar*—Easy Cure—Solution of the Demoniacal Complaints.

THE Abyssinians, as a nation, are a strong, robust, and wiry race. Accustomed from early childhood to simple diet and constant exposure to the open air, their system becomes inured to privations, and impervious to the various ills which afflict humanity in a more artificial state of society. The most prevalent diseases are fever and dysentery, but these seldom assume the malignant character they exhibit in the "*kolla*" or low countries. Leprosy, scrofula and scorbutic affections, which hasten hundreds and thousands to premature decay and death, cannot be regarded as indigenous to the climate, since they are either the cruel legacy of dissolute parents, or the natural consequence of filthy habits and a vicious course of life. The disease, which may justly be styled national, is the "*Teenia*," or tape-worm. This complaint, from which scarcely one in a hundred is exempt, has hitherto baffled philosophical inquiry and ingenious speculation. The theory that assigns its probable cause to a too liberal indulgence in the

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use of raw meat is contradicted by the natives, who allege that its cause must be in the water and air, as otherwise numbers of herbivorous animals would not be exposed to its attacks. Happily I escaped this national scourge, and can, therefore, offer no experimental opinion on the disputed question; but I am inclined to believe that *broundo*, cayenne pepper sauce, *tedge* and *dallah*, are far more to blame for it than the murmuring rivulet and the soft cool breeze. Nature has kindly provided various remedies against this loathsome disease. A small grain, called "*In-quoquo*," was found to be an infallible antidote by the agents of Bishop Gobat; but the natives, with perverse obstinacy, consider the temporary relief effected every two months by a potent dose of *kosso* more conducive to health than an effectual and radical cure.

But, in dilating on the ills the Ethiopian is heir to, the *Bouda* and *Zar* must not be forgotten, since they occupy a most prominent place in the catalogue of evils which torture the brown-skinned children of the sun. Of the two, the *Bouda*, or sorcerer, as the word signifies, is the most dreaded. His powers in the black art are reported to be of a most varied character. At one time he will enslave the objects of his malice; at another he will subject them to nameless tortures; and not unfrequently his vengeance will even compass their death. Like the *Genii* and *Efrets* of the Arabian Nights, the *Bouda* invariably selects those possessed of youth and talent, beauty and wit, on whom to work his evil deeds. Those most profound in magic skill are the Jews, the inha-

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bitants of *Damot*, some *Godjamees*, and the workers in iron and brass, a trade almost exclusively monopolized by the poor despised *Falashas*. A variety of charms have been invented to counteract the *Bouda's* power, but the most potent and expensive are the amulets written by pious *debterahs*, and worn round the neck. The dread of the sorcerer has introduced a whole tribe of exorcists, who pretend to be able both to conjure the evil spirit, and also to detect his whereabout; and these are, accordingly, held in great awe by the people. Their traffic resembles in every respect that of the highwayman; with this difference only, that the one, in bold and unblushing language, calls on his victim to stand and deliver, and the other stealthily creeps into the midst of a troop of soldiers or amongst a convivial party of friends, and pronounces the mystical word *Bouda*. The uncouth appearance and sepulchral voice of the exorcist everywhere produce the deepest sensation, and young and old, men and women, gladly part with some article to get rid of his hated and feared presence. If, as sometimes happens, one or two less superstitious individuals object to these wicked exactions, the exorcist has a right to compel every one present to smell an abominable concoction of foul herbs and decayed bones, which he carries in his pouch; those who unflinchingly inhale the offensive scent are declared innocent, and those who have no such strong olfactory nerves are declared *Boudas*, and shunned as allies of the Evil One. In the time

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of *Goshu Beru's* rule in *Godjam* hundreds were executed on the suspicion of being *Boudas;* and even King Theodoros, till within the last few years when he began to study God's Word, continually sanctioned these judicial murders.

During the rainy season, when the weather, like the mind, is cheerless and dull, the *Boudas*, as if in mockery of the universal gloom, celebrate their saturnalia. In our small settlement at *Gaffat*, the monotony of our existence was constantly diversified by a *Bouda* scene. Towards the close of August, when every shrub and tree began to sprout and blossom, the disease degenerated into a regular epidemic; and in the course of an evening, two, three, and, not unfrequently, every hut occupied by natives would ring with that familiar household cry. A heavy thunder-storm, by some mysterious process, seemed invariably to predispose the people to the Bouda's torturing influence.

I remember one day, about the end of August, we had a most terrific tempest. It commenced a little after midday, and lasted till nearly five o'clock. During its continuance the air was completely darkened, except when the lightning's lurid blaze flashed athwart the sky, and relieved, for a few seconds, the almost midnight gloom. No human voice could be heard amidst the thunder's deafening crash, and the torrent's impetuous rage; everything above, beneath, and around, seemed in the agonies of dissolution, and it required no stretch of the imagination

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to believe that the wails and dismal groans, which rang on the ear, were the war-whoop of evil spirits engaged in a frantic and deadly contest.

The noise and tumult of the striving elements had scarcely subsided, when a servant of Mr. Mayer, a stout, robust, and masculine woman, began to exhibit the *Bouda* symptoms. She had been complaining the whole noon of languor, faintness, and utter incapacity for all physical exertion. About sunset her lethargy increased, and she gradually sank into a state of apparent unconsciousness. Her fellow-servants, who were familiar with the cause of the complaint, at once pronounced her to be possessed. To outwit the conjurer, I thought it advisable to try the effect of strong liquid ammonia on the nerves of the Evil One. The place being dark, faggots were ignited; and in their bright flickering light we beheld a mass of dark figures squatted on the wet floor around a rigid, motionless, and apparently dead woman. I instantly applied my bottle to her nose; but although the potent smell made all near raise a cry of terror, it produced no more effect on the passive and insensible patient, than if it had been water from the newly-formed rivulets.

The owner of *Gaffat*, an amateur exorcist almost by instinct, as if anticipating something wrong in that part of his domain occupied by the Franks, made his appearance in the very nick of time. This bloated and limping dotard, who had wasted his youth and manhood in folly and vice, for which, in his old age,

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he seeks to atone by discarding one after the other of his former wives, and by poring over the legends of saints and martyrs, no sooner hobbled into the hut than the possessed woman, as if struck by a magnetic wire, burst into loud fits of laughter and the paroxysms of a raving maniac. Half a dozen stalwart fellows caught hold of her, but frenzy imparted a vigour to her frame which even the united strength of these athletes was barely sufficient to keep under control. She tried to bite, kick, and tear every one within reach; and, when she found herself foiled in all these mischievous attempts, she convulsively grasped the unpaved wet floor, and, in imitation of the hyena, gave utterance to the most discordant sounds. Manacled and shackled with leather thongs, she was now partly dragged, and partly carried, to an open grassy spot; and there, under the starry vault of heaven, and in the presence of a considerable number of people, the conjurer, in a business-like manner, began his exorcising art. The poor sufferer, as if conscious of the dreaded old man's presence, struggled frantically to escape his skill; but the latter, disregarding her entreaties and lamentations, her fits of unnatural gaiety, and bursts of thrilling anguish, with one hand laid an amulet on her heaving bosom; whilst, with the other, he made her smell a rag, in which the root of a strong-scented plant, a bone of a hyena, and some other abominable unguents were bound up. The mad rage of the possessed woman being instantaneously hushed by this operation, the conjurer

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addressed himself to the *Bouda*, and, in language not fit for ears polite, requested him to give his name.* The Bouda, speaking through the medium of the possessed, replied, *Hailu Miriam.*

Conjurer.—Where do you reside?

Bouda.—In *Damot.*

Conjurer.—What is the name of your Father and Confessor?

Bouda.—My Father's name is *Negousye*, and my *Abadie's, Oubie.*

Conjurer.—Why did you come to this district?

Bouda.—I took possession of this person on the plain of *Wadela*, where I met her on the road from *Magdala.*

Conjurer.—How many persons have you already killed (literally eaten)?

Bouda.—Six.

Conjurer.—I command thee, in the name of the blessed Trinity, the twelve Apostles, and the three hundred and eighteen Bishops at the Council of Nicæa, to leave this woman, and never more to molest her.

The *Bouda* did not feel disposed to obey the conjurer; but on being threatened with a repast of glowing coals, which the majority do not relish, he became docile, and, in a sulky and ventriloquizing tone of voice, promised to obey the request.

Still anxious to delay his exit, he demanded something to eat; and, to my utter disgust, his taste was

* The *Bouda* belongs to the stronger sex, and is therefore spoken to in the masculine gender.

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as coarse as the torments inflicted on the young woman were ungallant. Filth and dirt of the most revolting description, together with an admixture of water, were the choice delicacies he selected for his supper. This strange fare, which the most niggardly hospitality could not refuse, several persons hastened to prepare; and when all was ready, and the earthen dish had been hidden in the centre of a leafy shrub, the conjurer said to the *Bouda*, "As thy father did, so do thou." These words had scarcely escaped the lips of the exorcist, when the possessed person leaped up, and, crawling on all fours, sought the dainty repast which she lapped with a sickening avidity and greediness. She now laid hold of a stone, which three strong men could scarcely lift, and, raising it aloft in the air, whirled it madly round her head for two seconds, and then fell senseless on the ground. In half-an-hour she recovered, but was quite unconscious of what had transpired.

Three other women had similar attacks that same evening, and that, too, without any premonitory symptoms. I tried to deceive one, and, instead of the disgusting concoction, put a wooden dish with bread and water in her way; but on smelling it she shrunk from its contents, and rapidly crept on till the strong effluvia brought her to the spot where the loathsome viands were concealed. Some conjurers are so expert in their art, that even at a distance they can control those under the influence of the nameless. A case of this kind, which occurred at *Magdala*, was narrated to me by an eye-witness. In this instance, the

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possessed was a young girl of attractive appearance. Her friends and companions, who at once suspected the *Bouda* symptoms, despatched a messenger to the exorcist; but, as he was then in a lazy mood, he commissioned a menial to conduct her to his own abode. The raving and frantic girl, upon receiving this summons, immediately relaxed in her violent frenzy, and grasping a huge and ponderous stone she lifted it on her head and calmly followed her guide.

In small villages and settlements, where no conjurer is at hand to exorcise the familiar spirit, the paroxysm of madness will spend itself in an hour or two; but the sufferer, worn out and prostrate, sinks down into a feverish lethargy and stupor, from which, I was assured by reliable individuals, few ever awake.

This curious malady, which Abyssinian credulity ascribes to the direct possession of the Wicked One, I am inclined to believe, from the details communicated to me by European residents, may be traced to far more natural causes than those assigned by the natives. The very persons most subject to the *Bouda* influence are, in themselves, a proof that, however puzzling the cure may be, there is no mystery about the origin of the disease. Among the numerous cases which came under my own notice, I ascertained that the sufferers invariably had either been afflicted with a disordered imagination, or shaken by much excitement or depression in their nervous system. The more intelligent natives admit, that the sober, moral, and virtuous of both sexes

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enjoy immunity from the demon's power; whilst on the contrary, those who indulge in morbid fancies, luxuriate in sinful indulgences, and riot in dissolute habits, are seldom, if ever, entirely free from the fear of a sudden attack.

Next in importance to the *Bouda* is the *Zar*. This malady is exclusively confined to unmarried women, and has this peculiar feature, that during the violence of the paroxysm it prompts the patient to imitate the sharp, discordant growl of the leopard. I recollect that the first time I saw a case of this description, it gave me a shock which made my blood run cold. The sufferer was a handsome, gay, and lively girl, a little above fifteen. In the morning she was engaged as usual in her work, when a quarrel ensued between her and other domestics. The fierce dispute, though of a trifling character, roused the passions of the fiery Ethiopian to such a pitch that it brought on an hysterical affection. The natives all cried, "She is possessed!" and certainly her ghastly smile, nervous tremour, wild stare, and unnatural howl justified the notion. To expel the *Zar*, a conjurer, as in the *Bouda* complaint, was formerly considered indispensable; but by dint of perseverance, the medical faculty of the country, to their infinite satisfaction, have at length made the happy discovery that a sound application of the whip is quite as potent an antidote against this evil as the necromancer's spell. Neither in the above, nor in any other instance that occurred among our own people, had we recourse to this remedy; but, instead of it, we made the patient

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inhale strong spirit of ammonia; and, if this failed, we left her to herself, and in a day or two she would again recover her impaired senses and wonted health.

In bringing this demoniacal subject to a close, I am forcibly reminded of the words, "Be sure your sin will find you out." That there is something in these diseases, and in their mode of cure, which transcends ordinary disorders, no one who has stood beside a frantic and agonized patient, and wondered at the sudden and more than dramatic transition from raving frenzy to childlike docility, can well deny; but without deciding whether it is epilepsy, catalepsy, or hysteria, I am quite sure that fiends and spirits have less to do with the matter than the irregular life and dissolute course which so many pursue.

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CHAPTER XII.

Close of the Rainy Season—Festivities—Terpsichorean Exercise—Universal Lustration—Favourable Auguries—The Plague—Bridge over the *Erib*—Melancholy Tidings—Primitive Court of Justice—An Unfortunate Marriage—Numerous Visitors—Low Diet—An Island in the Lake—Friendly Peasants.

Our tropical winter at length draws to a close, and spring, with its lovely bloom, its verdure, and perfumed breath, begins to shed a reviving influence over the cheerless face of nature. The woods and groves, so long dismal with melancholy sounds, re-echo to the cheerful melodies of birds, and the tender songs of the herdsmen. The overflowing rivers, the graves of many a flock, retire to their deep-worn rocky beds; the rain-saturated fields put forth hopeful signs of an abundant harvest; the valleys are clad in a dazzling garb of tender grasses; and everything, above and beneath, is radiant with the sunshine of happiness, love, and peace. The natives, who had been for some months in a state of torpor and physical stagnation, now shake off their slothful dulness, and in a round of holidays and festive commemorations inaugurate the budding season of the year. Mary, the foremost in rank among the celestial nobility, and the most honoured of all saints, had the first of these

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auspicious days dedicated to the memory of her assumption. The ceremonies of the celebration commenced at early dawn, when every one, clad in his best *shama*, and shining in an exuberant profusion of rank butter, repaired to church to hear the legends of the Virgin, and to pray at her shrine. On the return from service, all our people who could boast of a knife or sword assisted in the meritorious work of dissecting a cow, which we had *given* them in honour of the *fête*. The scent of meat attracted several devout adorers of the Madonna to the hill at *Gaffat;* and, notwithstanding our well-known disregard of saints and canonized celebrities, the gory joints were considered by those arrant gluttons as incontestable proof of our good taste, sound divinity, and superior devotion.

The banquet was followed by a dance. This national amusement, which the practice of the Church hallows, is more a gymnastic than a saltatory exercise. In these exhibitions there is nothing of the extravagance of the Egyptian almé, or the capering of the fashionable ball-room. A number of young people, brimful of gaiety and happiness, arrange themselves in a circle on the greensward, or under a shady tree, and, in a wild and pathetic strain, strike up a favourite ballad. As the notes become more wild and passionate, the whole ring divides according to the sexes; they then entwine their arms around each others' shoulders, and, in a graceful and picturesque attitude, sway their bodies backward and forward to the minstrelsy of

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their own voices. This continues for some time, when a dancer or *danseuse* advances into the centre, and gazes motionless on the mirthful group. The impassioned strains which now become more quick and lively, infuse new fire into the cold and statuesque form, and in a few seconds, that seemingly immovable piece of humanity quivers in every nerve to the melody of the tumultuous choir. When one performer is exhausted, another steps within the circle; and this will sometimes continue without interruption from noon till murky midnight. Our own people and their friends would willingly have kept it up till pretty late, but a hint to the *asash*, or major domo, broke up the magic ring, and the sable belles and their attendant swains left the pleasures of Terpsichore for the less dignified, though more important, occupation of the stable and kitchen.

The *fête* of the Virgin was followed, on the 10th of September, by that of St. John. On the eve preceding that day, which ushers in the New Year, most of Ethiopia's dirty children repair to rivers and ponds to enjoy the sadly-needed luxury of a thorough lustration. This annual lavation over, the faithful repair to church to partake of the Sacrament, and the profane go home to quaff, in remembrance of the abstemious Baptist, potent potations of *detch* and *dallah*. Before the rose-tinted clouds of morning vanish from the eastern horizon, servants and subordinates, decked out in garlands and wreaths, repair to the presence of their master or chief, and humbly offer him a nosegay of flowers as the gift most suitable to the happy season.

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We were particularly favoured on that occasion; but, I fear, the bouquets were flung in countless numbers at our feet, more in anticipation of our future liberality than from the purer motive of personal esteem. The generosity of the King and the *Aboona* towards the strangers, afforded us the means of exercising the most magnanimous hospitality to every one who brought us presents, or who, in whining and artificial accents, came to bid us God speed on our next day's departure. Our *asash* had an unlimited control over the flocks and larder on this holiday, and, judging from the quantity of meat, *dallah*, honey, and bread consumed by our hungry guests, one might almost have thought that a famine had recently visited the land, and given them an increased appetite. A priest from the neighbourhood of *Debra Tabor*, whose son, a deacon of the Church, had entered our service, most bravely distinguished himself on that occasion in the magic art of stowing away incredible quantities of *broundo*.

This old ecclesiastic, notwithstanding the vigour of his digestive organs and the bloated features of his sinister countenance, had once been a celebrated beau and favourite confessor. His story may be briefly told. Born of noble parents and heir to an extensive estate, the future priest was from his infancy dedicated to the sword, and not the altar. His father, like most Abyssinian magnates, was a man of easy morals, and soon wasted that portion of the property which the then raging civil war had still left to the family,

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and the scion of an aristocratic house entered on life's arena as a beggar, dependent on the charity of the benevolent. Christianity, which, even in countries where its divine truth is least understood, can boast of some monument, which the most refined heathenism never contemplated, has reared in Abyssinia convents and schools, where poor aspirants for ecclesiastical dignities receive gratuitous education. In one of these establishments the disappointed heir of fortune found a quiet shelter. Being a lad of quick perception and good talents, he rapidly graduated in the lore requisite for his sacred vocation. The cup of sorrow and grief which he had already drained to the dregs, gave him a distaste for the world, and he was about to devote himself to celibacy and seclusion, when chance unluckily led him to *Yetshu*, where he fell desperately in love with a pretty Mahomedan girl. His Fatima reciprocated the tender passion, and as he had on her account renounced the monk's skullcap for the priest's turban, she emulated his example, and for his sake abjured her Mahomedan creed. Having no particular claim to ecclesiastical preferments except a handsome wife, a blessing which the monkish Archbishop and *Etchegué* could not appreciate, the worthy man had daily to chant and sing in church till his throat was almost cracked to gain a penurious subsistence.

Romantic love and abject poverty, though very fine in theory, do not well harmonize in the hard and painful struggles of daily life; this, I believe, is a universal experience, and *Abadie Hailu* found that he

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did not form the exception to the rule. The attached couple for some time were indeed happy in their mutual affection, but those pleasant days came to an end; and one bright and sunny morning as he was officiating in the Church which so niggardly rewarded his toil, the faithless *Berooda* resumed the old musical name of *Fatima*, and eloped with a Mahomedan Khowadgee. Unable, according to the canons of orthodoxy, to solace his lacerated heart by a new alliance, the desolate priest stoically resigned himself to misery, *broundo*, and *detch*.

The *fête* of Kudus Yohannes having been duly celebrated, our devout friends, in return for their previous day's entertainment, unanimously united in promising us a prosperous journey. Although I had not much confidence in these auguries, yet I confess it afforded me a kind of secret satisfaction to part from the set of semi-savages, amongst whom we had been sojourning, under a shower of good wishes and valedictory blessings. The fresh and cloudless morning contributed largely to the buoyancy of spirits which we experienced; and the little band of missionaries set out from *Gaffat* to a new and untried field of labour in a frame of mind free from every fear, and inspired with the brightest hopes. Numerous friends on mules, horses, and on foot, accompanied us for about two miles, when once more they denuded their greasy shoulders, and amidst torrents of eloquent phrases bade us a final farewell.

At *Amora Gudell*, a perpendicular rock which derives its name from the countless eagles and vul-

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tures which have built their nests on its craggy and almost inaccessible heights, we made a short halt to rest our panting animals and gasping porters. From this spot to *Adith Beit Christyan*, or New Church, our road lay across a green, grassy plain, exquisitely enamelled with flowers and shrubs, around which bees, butterflies, and other gay insects were hovering in rapturous delight. On our arrival at the village, which I presume received its name in anticipation of the Church that is yet to be erected, we were greeted with the chilling cry, "*Beshita! beshita!*" *i.e.*, plague! plague! Our people, on hearing this awful word, were ready to fly from the tainted locality; but, as we had no inclination to jade our animals on the first stage, we ridiculed their cowardly terror, and this, far more than sharp reproofs, piqued their pride, and they all valorously declared that their fears had been prompted by anxiety for us, and not by any dread of danger to themselves.

Unable to obtain provisions for our large party in so poor a village, we took our guns and went in search of game. Our carriers asserted that they had seen several antelopes browsing near an adjacent rivulet, but after a vain and fatiguing hunt, we were obliged to content ourselves with three brace of tough pigeons for our frugal evening repast.

At seven in the morning we were again on our way. The plain, which looked so lovely and fair near Debra Tabor, became swampy and almost impassable as we receded from its more elevated parts. In some places the whole country had the appearance

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of a lake, and it required the greatest caution to steer clear of ruts and holes which treacherously intersected the submerged road. By dint of patient toil and unremitting exertion we jogged on to the river *Erib*, which we crossed on a solid stone bridge of seven arches,—one of the few monuments left by the Portuguese to perpetuate their fatal visit to these unfriendly shores. The river, which on a former journey I had forded much lower down on a mule, measured at this point, although the water had for many days been rapidly subsiding, more than fifteen feet; and we could see from the torn and saturated banks, that during its maximum rise it must have considerably exceeded double its present height.

While we were re-arranging our saddles, two soldiers came up to us, and at the sight of Mr. Flad they piteously exclaimed "Woe unto us, *Afa Negousee* is dead! Woe unto us, *Afa Negousee*, the wise and good, is dead!" After this touching effusion of unaffected grief, they informed us that the commandant of Magdala was no more, and that they had just been to the royal camp at *Derita* to announce to the King the doleful news. The sudden appearance of Mr. Flad, who had known the deceased chief, naturally enough reminded them afresh of the irreparable loss they had sustained; and to all our queries the faithful veterans had no other reply except the sorrowful lament, "Woe unto us, *Afa Negousee* is dead! *Afa Negousee*, the mighty and valiant, is dead!"

At midday we came to *Efag*, a village famous for its

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weekly cattle and cotton market. The close vicini
of the royal camp was no great inducement for a ha
but as our mules looked so sorry and woebegone, '
left our night's fare to chance, and rode straight up
hill where, under a cluster of trees, the *shum* and l
subordinates sat administering justice. His worsh
for a few moments interrupted the business of t
court in order to salute the strangers, and havi
done this in befitting magisterial style, he aga
squatted on his haunches and complacently listen
to the oratory of the litigants.

There were at least half-a-hundred fellows who h
knots in the corner of their *shammas*—the sign of
Abyssinian law-wrangler, and every one of the
boisterously clamoured to have his case brought
first. A grey-headed *negad*, or merchant, the mo
vociferous in the throng, after a good deal of rou
pushing and elbowing, ascended the little hillock a
stood erect, as if proud of his strength, in front
the wise men of *Efag*. His dress, which in the jos
had become deranged, he now gravely readjuste
and then, raising his right hand as if in adjuratic
he began his harangue in a tragic and impressi
manner. There was an earnestness, force, and pathe
in the speaker's attitude and voice which roused n
attention, and drew me nearer to the scene. I
was just narrating some wrongs he had sustaine
and, although I did not understand half he said, y
I could see, that his wild oratory and natural el
quence, had gained him the heart of the unru
audience and the sympathy of the grave judge. T

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wickedness of his opponent, a young *debterah*, who had *à l'Abyssinie* married his daughter, and, in less than a year, reconsigned her to the paternal care, formed the chief theme of his declamation; and, as if such a thing had never occurred before, he denounced his quondam son-in-law in a withering string of invectives, as the most consummate scoundrel that had ever escaped the executioner's knife. After this gush of righteous indignation, the defendant rushed forward, and in an elaborate strain of equally polite epithets, retaliated on his assailant. I already thought that the two combatants would never terminate their quarrel, and that probably the King would have to adjudicate the delicate question at issue, when the judge, who had for some minutes been energetically twisting his scanty beard, placidly proposed a compromise. To this suggestion the scamp of a *debterah* positively demurred, but a severe warning from the bench silenced his blustering tongue, and he promised to pay the discarded woman the value of a *sift shamma*,* on condition that it should release him from all future claim. The old father agreed to this proposal, and the hostile and passionate opponents, half content and half angry, quitted the scene of their late legal encounter.

I could have enjoyed for an hour or two longer the strange transactions of this Abyssinian Areopagus, had not the waning day urged us to find a retreat for the night. The spot where we had dismounted appeared

* A sift shamma is worth 16 shillings; and if of superior texture, 18 shillings.

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to us very inviting, but as the *shum* and his friends warned us against the packs of savage hyenas and bloodthirsty leopards, for which the whole district is infamous, we took their advice and moved an hour further north, to the village *Bada*.

This little hamlet, which looked so secluded and lovely among the high towering rocks, was, much to our annoyance, already crowded by a regiment of lawless troops, who had taken possession of every hut. Determined not to be driven about in all directions by wild beasts or savage soldiers we selected a dry grassy spot, and, in defiance of every danger, arranged our bivouac. The arrival of the travellers created quite a sensation in the village and its vicinity, and all hastened to have a peep at the white men. The commander of the troops, a tall pleasant-looking *baal kamees* who had formerly met Mr. Flad, came to renew the acquaintance. He was very talkative, and manifested a lively interest in our Mission to the Jews. Being anxious to obtain a New Testament, we gave him a copy in Amharic, out of which he immediately read several chapters to our motley assembly of armed and unarmed visitors. They all expressed their admiration and delight at the contents of the inspired volume, and wonderingly inquired amongst themselves, why their own priests kept truths so beautiful and sublime, disguised in a language no one could understand.

Well aware that the royal army, like a flight of locusts, had devoured the land, we despatched betimes several of our people on a foraging expedition. The

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hungry fellows amply provided with needles, looking-glasses, *mattebs*, and salts, set off full of glee towards all points of the compass to execute our behest. Their research, though most industrious, and stimulated by more than twenty-four hours' fast, was without success, and we had to make our day's meal on a cup of strong bitter coffee, whilst our servants frugally fared on a few loaves and a *gumbo* of *dallah*, which some hospitable peasants charitably brought to our camp.

Hunger and fatigue, wet and cold, are, however, incidents of no significance to the Abyssinian traveller. He breathes good air, traverses beautiful scenes, sleeps on fresh and odorific herbage every night, and, if blessed with good health, and happy in his work, the few trials and hardships to which he is now and then exposed are mere trifles, calculated only to break the monotony of his otherwise uniform existence.

At noon the following day, we were on the *Tzana*, opposite the picturesque and verdant islet of *Matracha*. As we had business to transact with the *aliga* of the Church, we hailed a boat, and instantly a well-shaped lighter, built of colossal rushes, that grow in the sea, shoved off from the shore. The primitive craft, as it gently glided over the smooth and unruffled deep, forcibly reminded me of the prophet's vessels of bulrushes, to which it bore a striking resemblance. Several hippopotami, which were sporting in the water, excited the hostility of our people (who piously hated all unclean animals), and they applied to them the

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family circle in the wilderness, were the most friendly natives we had yet met. They generously vied with each other to enhance their visitors' comfort, some by bringing wood, some by insisting on washing our feet, and some by soliciting us to share the luxury of their abode. We gratefully accepted every favour except the last; and even in this matter we would willingly have obliged our entertainers, had not a cowardly terror induced us to shrink from a hostile encounter with all the living concomitants of an Abyssinian domicile.

Serenaded into a profound slumber by the harmony of the growling leopard and mirthful hyena, the hours of the night sped so swiftly by, that our dew-covered garments were sparkling in the blaze of the morning light, before we or our people could realize the thought that it was actually day. A long stage which we had to accomplish, accelerated our preparations, and we were again contentedly toiling over meadows and fields, just as the vapoury mists disappeared from the *Woggera* mountain-tops.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Market Visitors—Archiepiscopal Palace—*Gondar*—A Funeral — Touching Scene — Belief in Purgatory—*Tascar*— Filial Affection.

THE general anxiety to reach *Gondar*—the capital of Abyssinia, and the loadstone of the natives—before evening, imparted fresh strength and elasticity to our footsore people, and they bounded along at a rate that would have entitled them to the prize had they been running a race. A brisk march of several hours brought us to *Magatch*, which is spanned by a bridge of five arches. There we met a good number of people who were on their way to the market of the metropolis. The commodities which they had for sale or barter were of the most motley character conceivable. Here was a man sweating under a heavy bag of *teff*; and, a little further on, walked a woman carefully supporting on her elaborately-curled head a crushing *gumbo* of honey. Now passed a whole group charged with garlic and onions, chilies and pepper; in a few minutes more came a procession of donkeys, almost smothered beneath bulky and shapeless bales of low-land cotton; and anon, the rugged and steep high-way was blocked up by droves of oxen and cows, destined to furnish *broundo* joints to the inhabitants

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of the royal city. The peripatetic speculators in the animal and vegetable creation of Ethiopia gazed at us in wondering surprise, and, for the nonce, business was merged in the conjectures excited by the visit of the strangers. They were all exceedingly civil to us, and we passed without inconvenience through the steaming and gaping crowd.

The animated scene presented by the multitude hurrying to market beguiled the tediousness of our journey, and brought us in less time than we anticipated to the capital of King *Theodoros*. His Grace the Metropolitan having kindly placed the archiepiscopal residence at our disposal, we made straight for *Kudus Gabriel*, where the Primate's steward, who had already been apprised by a special messenger of our intended visit, gave us a hearty and cordial reception.

The *Aboona's* palace, which evidently does not date back to the time of the magnificent Prester John, to whom certain questionable authorities assign an Abyssinian origin, stands at the southern corner of a spacious square. On one side of the quadrangle are a range of low stables and the hovels of the domestics; on another, a garden with a few more primitive and unsightly dens, in which house the domestic chaplains, clerks, and shums of the Primate; the remaining space is monopolized by plantations of briers and nettles, varied by heaps of decomposing matter and stagnant pools. These unseemly sights and smells did not in the least trouble us. We were tired, and a stone and mud house, where one could

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lie down without fear of being devoured by beasts of prey, was a luxury that amply compensated for many trifling inconveniences. Influenced by these considerations, we leaped from our saddles, and, bounding up a flight of dilapidated stone stairs, found ourselves in a small narrow vestibule, whence we groped our way into a dark and dusty room. The entrance was nearly choked up with hay and straw, which excluded every ray of light from gaining ingress at the door; happily, the architect had anticipated such a contingency, and provided the room with an oblong aperture as a window, and through this, after removing a ponderous shutter, a blaze of light, subdued by clouds of dust, came pouring into the prelatial guest-chamber. To our infinite satisfaction, the place was utterly destitute of all furniture, and, consequently, of its host of attendant plagues. A glance around the bare walls also assured us that scorpions, centipedes, spiders, and other unwelcome intruders had hitherto dealt gently with the great Churchman's home, a favour seldom extended to any humbler dwelling in Abyssinia. All these auspicious signs augured well for our comfort during our short stay in the metropolis, and we experienced a sensation of ineffable delight as we stretched our weary limbs on the fresh hay which we had profusely spread over the unpaved floor.

Our apartment being now appropriately furnished, and all our other wants abundantly supplied from the *Aboona's* flocks and herds, I sallied forth at the first flush of day, to have a quiet and undisturbed view of

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Gondar. An overhanging grassy platform in the rear of our premises, just opposite the *Gimp*, or castle, afforded me the best position for satisfying my curiosity. Standing on that spot, I beheld, as in a shifting panorama, the various groups of houses and churches which occupy the northern and south-western side of this strange city. The widely-separated and distinct clusters of houses, interspersed with fields and trees, presented, in the golden glow of the morning, a very striking and pleasing sight. There, just beneath my feet, in a deep ravine, overlooked by several conically-shaped huts, a sparkling brook leaped over its rocky bed, down to the river *Gaha*, where, almost in the sight of the populous Mohammedan quarter, called *Islam Beit*, Mr. Plowden, the English Consul, received his deathblow from a freebooter's lance. From this glen, up on a verdant heath, lay the *Etchequé Beit*, where the ecclesiastical head of the monks and the more respectable inhabitants have their dwellings. On the left of that irregular elevation, stretched *Bada*, with its large church and extensive groves, crumbling walls and squalid hovels, and quite on the summit, beyond the eye's ken, gleamed in the blazing sun the tottering towers and ruined halls of the once stately, but now decayed and almost uninhabitable palace.

A plaintive and melancholy wail, which suddenly broke on my ear, induced me to return to the square, to witness the funeral ceremonies of a young woman who had died the previous night. The priests and deacons, who, out of respect for their Primate's servant, mustered in strong force, came all fully robed,

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and their flaring and tawdry canonicals ill accorded with the mournful ceremony they were about to perform. Some of the priests went into the house where the deceased lay, to comfort the bereaved relatives; but the greater number continued outside, waving incense and chanting the *Wadasye Miryam*, or "Ave Maria." The corpse, which in the meantime had been washed and dressed, was then laid on an *alga*, and the procession formed. On seeing this, the relatives and friends gave vent to their uncontrollable grief in the most violent lamentations and agonizing cries. Some franticly grasped the bier as if they would still retain the beloved object; others gave utterance to the heart's intense despair by sobs and sighs, by tearing their hair, rending their clothes, and even by dashing their nails into their neck and face till the blood trickled down in copious streams. The most affecting and touching sight was the mother, the old grandmother, and two sisters, who, each with some trifling memento of the departed in their clasped hands, ran distractedly about the court, telling every one some story or incident connected with those precious relics of an undying love, which they continually pressed to their lips, or held to their throbbing hearts.

The prayers being ended the bier was lifted on the shoulders of the bearers, and, preceded by the priests, moved on towards the church. I did not follow; but as it may interest the reader of these pages, I will add the concluding ceremonies connected with the interment of the dead. On emerging from the gate, or enclosure,

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where the corpse lies, a halt is made, when the priests chant a portion of the 119th Psalm, and the confessor, on the receipt of a salt, formally absolves the deceased. This ceremony, whatever the distance to the cemetery may be, is repeated seven times. On arriving near the tomb, the friends and relations are once more allowed to gaze on the dear object of their affections; and then, during the reading of the concluding eight verses of the above Psalm, the body, coffined or uncoffined, is lowered into the grave. The mourners now retire to the home of the deceased, where every morning, for a whole week, the *Lekso*, or wailing ceremony is repeated. During this period no fire may be kindled in the house, nor any food prepared; but all the wants of the bereaved must be provided for by the friends and neighbours, who willingly do this, as it is considered a good and meritorious work.

The Abyssinian Church holds the doctrine of purgatory, and *post mortem* purification. Its origin may be traced to the Jews, though self-interest and avarice assign to it a higher source. The number of masses requisite for the repose of the soul has not been defined by the Church, and thus the misery or bliss of the defunct is at the mercy of niggardly relatives and exacting priests. At the expiration of a fortnight or month, the *Tascar*, or banquet for the dead, is celebrated, when priests and *debterahs* will, in pious devotion, devour a widow's last cow, or riot on her hard savings of many years' toil. The commemorative feast is repeated once every

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twelve months; and this gluttonous exhibition the devout and superstitious family believe enhances the bliss of the deceased, and wafts the soul to brighter realms. Within the last few years, through the circulation of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue, more enlightened views have been diffused amongst the people, and many now openly ridicule the idea that the indecent debauch of depraved ecclesiastics can advance the happiness of departed spirits.

An instance of this altered feeling occurred in a village on the plains of *Dembea*. A *shum* of considerable rank, while on a visit to the *kolla*, or low country, caught a dangerous fever, which, on his return home, proved fatal. The distracted relatives, in the excess of their grief, found some consolation in the tears of friends and the cordial sympathy of a sorrowing district. Liberality to the priests, and kindness to the poor had won the defunct official golden opinions, and bands of ecclesiastics and mendicants, in hypocritical rivalry, emulated each other in extolling the many virtues which had adorned his character. The sorrow-stricken widow and bereaved children, in the exuberance of their gratitude for the consolation so generously proffered, bestowed handsome largesses on several churches and the mass-saying priests. A grand *Tascar* was also ere long appointed, and, in eager expectation of a profuse supply of *detch*, *dallah*, and *broundo*, groups of hungry guests, from far and near, were wending their way on the auspicious day towards the house of mourning. The son of the late district authority, a shrewd, waggish

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fellow, who had more concern for the patrimony than for his ancestor's soul, deferentially welcomed the grinning, bowing, and flattering multitude. A whole string of complimentary and unmeaning phrases having been duly exchanged between the host and his guests, the conversation spontaneously turned on the many noble qualities of the late *baal beit*, which every one eulogized in most extravagant terms. "And do you, my fathers, really believe," inquired the dutiful son, "that my good and honoured parent is in the blest abode of the righteous?" "No doubt," shouted each *broundo* craving throat, "he is in Abraham's bosom." "If this is true," returned the scrupulous inquirer, "and who can question the words of the holy fathers? he is in a safe and happy place, and I must not disturb him by a *Tascar*." The confounded reverends sought to modify and retract their verdict, but the pious host was inexorable in his filial resolve, and high and low, priests and beggars, were compelled to march off with hunger unappeased.

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CHAPTER XIV.

Falashas—Early Settlement in Abyssinia—Chequered Existence—Prejudices against Unbelievers—Deprecate Early Marriages—Offer Sacrifices—Perform the Ceremonial Law—Strictly Observe the Sabbath—Possess no Correct Ideas about the Messiah—Priestly Superstitions—Mistaken Sanctity.

FALASHAS, from the Ethiopic *falas*, to which this book owes its title, signifies exile, and is the name by which the Jews in Abyssinia are designated. The period of their settlement, in that remote country, is involved in uncertainty. According to their own tradition, and the concurrent testimony of native Christian writers, they came to Ethiopia in the reign of *Maqueda*, the Queen of *Sheba*. This princess who, in the lays and legends of the country, is portrayed in the most glowing and extravagant colours, had frequently heard from merchants and traders of the magnificence and wisdom of the Jewish Monarch. Curiosity, not unmixed with a touch of pardonable vanity, prompted her to visit the court of the wise and famous Solomon. Her faultless beauty, and intellectual sagacity, won for her the favour and assiduous attentions of the gifted King; and after a lengthened sojourn at Jerusalem she returned to her own dominions, laden with munificent presents, and, what greatly enhanced her happiness, with a youthful

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heir and prince, in the person of her son *Menilek*. The bond of friendship and union between the two mighty rulers, initiated by mutual regard and cemented by the tenderest affection, was made still more lasting and secure by religious sympathy. In the train of the illustrious princess, besides a number of distinguished Jews from every tribe, was Azariah, the son of the High-priest Zadok, to whom the pious parent had specially intrusted the education of *Menilek* and the guardianship of the *tabot*, or transcript of the law. The impetuous zeal of the emigrants found ample scope for its loftiest inspiration in the new world to which they were transplanted, and in the course of a few years the worship of the God of Israel extensively supplanted the idolatries of Ethiopia.

From these vague traditions in which truth and fiction are inextricably jumbled together, the inquirer does not gain much trustworthy information on the history of Ethiopia, and the settlement of the Jews in that country. The most probable conjecture is, that at a very early period—perhaps when Solomon's fleet navigated the Red Sea—some adventurous Jews, impelled by love of gain, settled among the pleasant hills of Arabia Felix; whilst others of a more daring and enterprising spirit were induced to try their fortune in the more remote, though not less salubrious, mountain scenes of Ethiopia. The Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon, whether she reigned over both or only one of those countries, is an incontestable proof that the wise King's fame had spread far beyond his

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own empire. To subjects of a monarch so renowned for wisdom, wealth and power, a gracious reception was, no doubt, everywhere accorded, and the new settlers, in their prosperity abroad, probably soon forgot the attractions of their home in Judea. Subsequent troubles in Palestine and the final overthrow of the Jewish monarchy by Nebuchadnezzar, increased the number of the emigrants, and in the lapse of a few centuries the Jews formed a powerful State in Arabia, and a formidable and turbulent people in the Alpine regions between *Tigré* and *Amhara* in Ethiopia.

The legend of *Menilek* and the supposed descent of the Abyssinian Sovereigns from the line of Solomon, unquestionably exercised a salutary influence in favour of the Jews, and contributed more than anything else towards the spread of those Mosaical rites and ceremonies, which to this day are still so extensively engrafted on the Christianity of the country. On the promulgation of the Gospel the Jews, who had now become scattered all over the western plains of *Tschelga* and *Dembea*, retired again to their mountain fastnesses of *Semien* and *Bellesa*, where under their own kings and queens, called Gideon and Judith, they maintained till the beginning of the 17th century a chequered and independent existence. With the fall of their last ruler, and the capture of their strongholds, the Falashas were driven from their rocky homes, and forced to seek a refuge in the midst of their enemies, the detested *Amharas*. The provinces where they at present reside are *Dembea, Quara, Wog-*

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gera, Tschelga, and *Godjam,* where their settlements are strikingly distinguished from the Christian villages by the red earthen pot on the apex of their *mesquid,* or place of worship, which towers from the centre of the thatched huts by which it is invariably environed.

Claiming a lineal descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the Falashas pride themselves on the fame of their progenitors, and the purity of the blood that circulates in their own veins. Intermarriages with those of another tribe or creed are strictly interdicted, nay, even the visit to an unbeliever's house is a sin, and subjects the transgressor to the penance of a thorough lustration and a complete change of dress before he can return to his own home. Their stern uncompromising sectarian spirit has been highly beneficial in excluding from their community that licentious profligacy in which all the other inhabitants of Ethiopia riot; and it is generally admitted that Falasha men and women seldom, if ever, stray from the path of virtue, or transgress the solemn law of the decalogue.

The bane of early marriages—the blight of domestic happiness and holy affection in so many countries, the Jew in Abyssinia justly deprecates, and no parent will give his daughter to a man who is not conscious of the responsibility he contracts, and willing to labour for the woman he has wooed. Most of the men enter into the marital state at an age varying from twenty to thirty, and the woman from fifteen to twenty; and the troth once plighted, no priestly

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power can ever annul. Polygamy they do not practise, nor are their daughters and wives shut up in closely-fenced huts as amongst the Christian magnates; on the contrary, they enjoy immunity from all slavish restraint, and their graceful and modest deportment is the best proof that they are worthy of it.

Faithful in their domestic relations, the Falashas are also, as far as their limited knowledge of the Scriptures extends, faithful to their religious convictions. The law of Moses, which they profess to observe, is the formula after which they have moulded their worship; and it sounds strange to hear in central Africa of a Jewish altar and atoning sacrifices. Their *mesquids*,* like the Christian Churches, consist of three divisions, with an entrance towards the east. The admission into these different courts is rigorously regulated by the Levitical law, and the severest penalty would be inflicted on any one who should incautiously pollute the sacred edifice. In the rear of every place of worship is a small enclosure with a huge stone in the centre; and on this crude altar the victim is slaughtered, and all other sacrificial rights performed. This sanctum is as sacredly guarded from unlawful intrusion as the rest of the premises, and woe betide the stranger who, ignorant of Falasha customs, ventures too close to the forbidden precincts. Before I had been initiated into the mysteries of mesquid architecture, I was one day on the very verge of committing this unpardonable offence. It

* This word is evidently derived from the Hebrew סגד "to worship."

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was a very sultry and close noon when, after several hours' fatiguing march, we reached a Falasha village. Eager to obtain a short rest, I went in quest of a cool and quiet shelter, when accidentally I espied in the midst of a secluded grassy spot a smooth block, that looked as if it had been charitably placed there to invite the weary to solitude and repose. The thorny stockade easily yielded to the iron of my lance, and I was just about to ensconce myself behind the flattened stone when a chorus of angry voices, made still more clamorous by the ever-tantalizing echo, reminded me of my mistake, and urged me to beat a hasty retreat.

The painful scarcity of the sacred volume among the Falashas, which forcibly reminds one of the pathetic denunciation in Amos, ch. viii., 11, 12, is exhibited in their unconscious deviation from that very law which they so loudly profess to observe. Their sacrifices are most capriciously offered, and, with the exception of the Paschal Lamb, neither the offering on the Sabbath nor on the day of atonement is in accordance with the original command. Ignorant as the priests and their people are of the contents of God's Word, they possess a most familiar knowledge of those chapters in Leviticus that treat of the laws of purification. Saturday after Saturday the Falasha congregations throughout Abyssinia, hear in their *mesquids* an exposition or discourse on that edifying topic; even a stranger, whom the officiating ministers deign to honour, is condemned to listen amidst the melodious *la la la's* of the women to a chapter describing leprosy, plague, or other ills which sin and

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dirt, vice and ungodliness have entailed on offending humanity. To provide for any such contingency every Falasha settlement has a hut at its outskirts, and there the unclean and impure must take refuge during the prescribed number of days.

This ritual scrupulosity involves many social hardships, and inflicts on numbers many a keen pang. Particularly in the hour of dissolution, when the sweet expressions of friendship and love are so soothing to the agonized soul and anguished frame, the dying Falasha has no affectionate hand clasped in his, and no words of comfort from beloved objects whispered in his ears. The inflexible law forbids the last offices to the weeping relative, and the helpless sufferer is in death's agonizing convulsions dragged from the weary couch into the open air, where the polluted and unclean remove him from the bare ground to the tainted and lonely hut.

The feasts ordained in Scripture are regularly observed by the Falashas, though with less rigour than by the Jews in other parts of the world. Passover, which also according to Exodus xii. 2, marks the commencement of their new year, is solemnized by offering the appointed sacrifice, and by the substitution of unleavened for leavened bread. These passover cakes they do not prepare beforehand in the orthodox style, but each family bakes every day the quantity requisite for the household. On the feast of Pentecost, the feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles, the people bring their offerings to the *mesquids* and also join in appropriate commemorative prayers, but beyond this and

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abstinence from agricultural pursuits, they neither blow the horn, erect booths, nor practise the other ancient ceremonies of the synagogue.

But, notwithstanding this apparent laxity in the observance of their other festivals, they entertain the most rigid notions as to the sanctity of the Sabbath. The preparations for the due celebration of this sacred day commence on Friday at noon, when every one, who is not prevented by illness, repairs to an adjacent river to bathe and change his garb. This task accomplished, the majority lazily saunter about in the fields, or indolently recline on the grassy margin of some sparkling stream till sunset summons to the *mesquid*. The service, which consists in chanting Psalms and hymns relieved by allegorical stories, and a few verses of a chapter of the book of Leviticus, lasts a considerable time, and in some places, the plaintive notes of the worshippers may even be heard across the quiet valley and around the lonely hill throughout the night. This extreme religious fervour the priests exclusively monopolize, nor do their flocks envy them a privilege, which would rob them after six days' toil of that very rest and physical health, which the Sabbath was designed to promote.

Early on the following morning, knots of figures enveloped in the graceful folds of a white cotton dress, are again seen trooping up the narrow lane and over the green sward towards the humble building dedicated to the worship of God. The service of the *mesquid* having been duly celebrated, the people again repair to their huts, where, after a cold and frugal

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repast, they either indulge in a nap, or meet together for social intercourse. Most of the priests remain in the house of prayer from Friday night till Saturday evening, and no trifling circumstance could induce the few whom sickness or age forces to retire to transgress the misinterpreted command: "Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

Some of the prayers used in the *mesquid* are full of devotional sentiments and impressive ejaculations. Thus, on Saturday morning, they begin:—

"Thou, O Lord, hearest in heaven the worship of thy saints; hear us also when we cry unto thee in thy holy temple. O Lord, be not angry with us, nor suffer us to be destroyed. Remember the covenant of our fathers, whom thou didst redeem out of Egypt's bondage, and forgive us our sins, and blot out our transgressions, which have separated us from thee.

"God of our fathers, turn unto us, and cause us to live.

"God of Abraham, turn unto us, and cause us to live.

"God of Isaac, turn unto us, and cause us to live.

"God of Jacob, turn unto us, and cause us to live.

"God of angels, turn unto us, and cause us to live.

"O Lord, lead us into the right way, and give peace unto Zion, and salvation unto Jerusalem."

Removed from their native land long before the final dispersion of their race, the *Falashas* have continued free from many of the burdens, which pharisaical pride and arrogance imposed on the superstitious credulity of other Jews. Broad phylacteries and the

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garments of fringes are utterly unknown among them, nor do they wash the cup, or practise any of the decrees of the rabbins. They fast twice a-week, and forty days before Easter; but, I believe, in this matter the *Falasha* priests have reciprocated the plagiarism on their own religious system by the Christian fathers. About the advent of the Messiah they have no intelligent or definite idea. "We believe that Jerusalem will again be rebuilt" is the answer on the lip of every *Falasha*, when questioned as to the future destiny of his nation. This event they regard as the consummation of their brightest hopes—the realization of their fondest mundane visions. Against our Lord they cherish none of those prejudices, which have become interwoven with the faith of their people in all other lands. The prophecy in Gen. xlix. 10; Deut. xviii. 15; and Isa. vii. 14, they readily refer to Jesus, the greatest of all prophets; but, on being taxed with their unbelief in not recognizing His claims, the common people naïvely reply, "We are ignorant and accept what our priests teach;" and the priests find an apology in saying, "We adhere to the faith and customs handed down to us by our fathers."

Exemplary in their morals, cleanly in their habits, and devout in their belief, the *Falashas* are also industrious in the daily pursuits and avocations of life. Husbandry and a few simple trades—such as smiths, potters, and weavers—constitute the sole occupations in which they engage; commerce they unanimously repudiate as incompatible with their Mosaic Creed, and it is quite a disappointment not to find a single

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merchant among a quarter of a million of people, the lineal descendants of those who are supposed to have acquired a taste for traffic and riches, on the very eve of their emancipation from Egyptian servitude.

The conscientious fidelity of the *Falasha* to the law, is strangely inverted by the very priests who pretend to be its props and support. According to the unimpeachable annals of the Church, Christianity was introduced into Abyssinia at the commencement of the fourth century, in the year of our Lord 330. The Jewish religion, free from all traditional corruptions antecedent to this date, as has already been mentioned, had numerous adherents both in *Habesh* and across the Straits, in Arabia the Happy. Islamism, which, like an irresistible equatorial conflagration, spread its devastating and devouring flames from the Indus to the Ganges, and from the Wall of China to the Pillars of Hercules, annihilated the Jewish polity in the land of its birth, and offered the alternative of death or the Koran. The existence of a Jewish colony in an adjacent continent, no doubt induced many to seek liberty in exile, and toleration in penury. Fanaticism, like an epidemic, intensified by persecution, was fed in solitude, and ripened on *Semien's* stern and craggy heights. The poor emigrants, having preferred poverty and want to liberty and a hated creed, now sought to infuse their own spirit of bigotry into their coreligionists; and as the Christians had not profited much by the Gospel, so the Jews had evidently not been much benefited by the solemn

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spiritual truths taught by Moses. Sacrifices and misunderstood ceremonies constituted then, as at present, their whole religious system. The people, who always recognized in their spiritual guides the arbitrators of their future weal or woe, willingly paid them, as they still do, the homage of their hearts, and the tithe of all their earthly possessions. Human ambition, however, is quite as soaring in Central Africa as in civilized Europe, and the grasping priest, not content with his sacerdotal character, must needs be also distinguished from the common herd by the sanctity of his person, and the immaculate purity of his life. The laxity of morals amongst the Christians, which had also infected the Jews, afforded the longed-for opportunity, and a fanatic called *Gorgorius*, who proclaimed himself a prophet, loudly denounced the prevailing evil, and enjoined on all who would follow him to take the same steps as those who in the earlier days of Christianity put a mistaken construction on one of our Lord's sayings in Matt. xix.

Impelled by a blind and implicit faith in the regenerator of their caste, these priests, after their initiation frequently pass months and years, like the Christian hermit in times of yore, in swampy marshes, stern wilds, and poisonous jungles, where roots or dried peas, (which latter they carry with them,) are their only means of subsistence. Numbers succumb to the noxious influence of the atmosphere, others perish of famine, whilst not a few become the prey of the lion, tiger, hyena, and other voracious and venomous beasts, which inhabit those unsightly tracts.

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These hardships and dangers, one would think, were quite enough to deter any one from so hazardous and difficult a novitiate; but such is the contagion of fanaticism, that not only will many patiently for years and years endure pains and privation, hunger and toil, but scores, in the wild frenzy of their disordered imagination, will, every year during the rainy season, seek peace for their troubled souls, by a voluntary grave, in the deep and rapid streams which intersect the whole land. *Debterah Negousee*, an honest and candid *Falasha*, told me he knew a priest who threw himself into a boisterous river flowing through *Armat-gioho*, but as the current was very strong, and the banks in some parts on a level with the water, he was drifted ashore in a state of stupor. The self-immolating ascetic, when consciousness returned, felt deeply afflicted at this escape from premature death; and as if some great misfortune had befallen him, he lamented in his restoration to earth, an imaginary unfitness for heaven. Those who thus inflict on themselves all the tortures and wasting agonies frail humanity can endure, are regarded by the common people with great veneration; though others, and particularly the *debterahs*, or learned class, consider them proud, arrogant, and self-righteous fanatics. The dwellings and convents of these ascetics are carefully isolated from the abodes of the impure and unholy people; nay, as every contact with the common herd communicates contamination, and involves laborious lavations of body and dress, they will not eat, drink, or sleep in the houses of other people; even their own fields

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must be cultivated, the harvest reaped, and the bread prepared by themselves or younger monks.

There is something in the very appearance of these ascetics, which proclaims them martyrs to their own bigotry and self-created delusion. The common people have all an erect, upright carriage, altogether free from that nervous and shrinking diffidence which external tyranny or internal despair engender; but the priests, whenever their own piety and self-righteous deeds are not questioned, have, as a body, the unhappy look, the knitted brow, the restless glance which speak of corroding cares and hopeless anguish. In physiognomy, most of the *Falashas* bear striking traces of their Semitic origin. Among the first group we saw at *Gondar*, there were some whose Jewish features no one could have mistaken, who had ever seen the descendants of Abraham either in London or Berlin. Their complexion is a shade paler than that of the Abyssinians, and their eyes, although black and sparkling, are not so disproportionately large as those which characteristically mark the other occupants of the land.

These people so isolated from the rest of the world, and so unsocial in all their habits, presented most formidable obstacles to the success of missionary efforts. To despise and abhor every alien creed as worthless and false, has always been the secret boast of the priest, and an essential lesson enforced at the *mesquid*. The idolatries and gross superstitions of the various races and tribes in and around Ethiopia rendered such intolerance not only justifiable, but

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absolutely necessary, and one can scarcely wonder that the Hebrew, in the midst of these moral wastes and sin-stained regions, should consider himself the sole possessor of the true faith—the sole adorer of the true and invisible God. News of our arrival in the country, and of the object we sought to achieve, no sooner spread through their scattered settlement, than, in an ebullition of mistaken zeal, they solemnly resolved not to have any intercourse with men who, as it had been misrepresented to them, were anxious to wean them from the spiritual worship of the great *Adonai** of Israel to the senseless idols of the Abyssinian Church. The delay in obtaining the requisite official sanction to our work, which we found extremely harassing at the time, was, however, under an overruling Providence made subservient to allay their bigotry and to remove their groundless fears. That our belief differed materially from that of the detested *Amharas*, they had already heard from soldiers in the royal camp, and monks on the roadside; and when they received exaggerated intelligence of the *Aboona's* opposition to our efforts, their curiosity was roused to the highest pitch, and priests and common people manifested a most anxious solicitude to hear the extraordinary strangers, whom pure compassion for their souls' welfare, had prompted to encounter the dangers of a long and weary journey.

* The tetragammaton, or ineffable name of Jehovah, frequently occurs in the *Falasha* prayers, and they attach a great mystery to its signification.

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CHAPTER XV.

Visit to *Avorno*—Jews in British Uniform—Adoration of the Queen of England—Scope of the Law—False Report—Castle of the *Waizoros*—The Proud Monk humbled—Monument of *Fasilidas'* Horse—Remains of former Wealth—Apt Illustration—The Shadow King—Uncomfortable Vestry—Church of St. Anastasius—Picturesque Situation—Devotionless Worshippers — Transubstantiation — Conversion of a Sceptic—Worthy Communicants—The *Tabot*.

THE impassable gulph between us and the *Falashas* being now bridged over, we at once commenced our missionary work by visiting *Avorno*, half-an-hour's distance south-west of *Gondar*. This village, which lies on the other side of the river *Gaha*, on a rich and fertile plain, consists of about thirty houses and a *mesquid*. Forbidden by ceremonial rigour from entering a *Falasha* dwelling, we took shelter from the vertical rays of a scorching sun, behind a dilapidated wall, overshadowed by the mimosa and the graceful euphorbia. The report of our arrival instantly attracted every one, who was at home, to the spot where we had alighted. After the usual salutations, we inquired whether they had any religious books, to which they replied, "We have Moses and David." On this we rejoined, "Do you also believe in the Prophets, and in Christ, of whom all the inspired writers unitedly testify?" They hesitated a little,

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and then said, in a timid tone of voice, as if conscious that they were uttering an untruth, "We keep the law." We reminded them that they could neither keep the law, and that the law was not able, even if they possessed the ability to perform all its rites, and to conform to all its ordinances, to procure for them pardon of sins, or acceptance with God. We further told them that a sacrifice far more precious than those that bled on the altar in the temple was indispensable, and that Christians possessed this sacrifice in Christ, who, by His vicarious suffering, atoned for our guilt, and provided for our justification. They cordially assented to every word we said, and only regretted that they were too ignorant to retain all these precious truths. To our inquiry whether they had any desire to learn, they exclaimed with an imploring expression in their black lustrous eyes, "O yes! O yes!" We then informed them that we were also *Falashas*, who, moved by compassion for their hopeless and deplorable condition, had crossed seas and deserts, dreary swamps and unsightly wilds, to communicate to them those tidings of mercy, which alone can secure peace to the troubled conscience, and fill the soul with love to a sin-hating God. They were exceedingly grateful for our interest in *their* spiritual welfare and everlasting happiness. At our departure they all accompanied us, and we had several times to entreat them to return, before they could be persuaded to tear themselves away from their unexpected friends.

On our way home we visited *Kudus Yohannes*,

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which next to that at *Quosquam*, is the handsomest and most gorgeously bedaubed of the forty-four churches in and around *Gondar*. Like all these edifices, it is built in a circular shape, surrounded by a high wall, and groves of stately cypresses which, whilst they impart a gloomy and solemn aspect, also tend to invest these spots with all the loneliness and desolation of the shrines dedicated to the demons and gods of heathen mythology.

Having *Gebra Egziabeher*, the principal steward of the *Aboona* for our cicerone, the doors of *Kudus Yohannes* flew open at our approach, and, without any question, we were permitted to enter the corridor which divides the court of the priests from the *Kudus Kudusan*, or holy of holies. The ecclesiastics, who had collected around us, anxious to elicit the white man's admiration for the works of native genius and art, complacently directed our gaze to the various daubs which covered its walls; but although St. George and the Dragon, angels and fiends, heaven and hell, were portrayed in the most outrageous colours, the whole interior of this sacred edifice presented a most unpleasing sight. One aspiring artist, weary perhaps of the antiquated cherubims and saints, the blazing flames, and leafy bowers, which are the ordinary ornament of their churches, had sought immortal fame by painting quite a new subject—the Migration of the Israelites. In his picture he represented them marching in soldier-like attitude over the heaving and surging waves of the red sea, clad in British uniform, with muskets and bayonets on their shoulders. I

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inquired of our attendants, from whence the Ethiopian Raphael had stolen the Frankish dress, with which he had indued the Hebrew emigrants, but they evidently attributed the sublime idea to inspiration, though, as I subsequently learned, *Kudus Yohannes* was indebted for this unique historical picture to the gentlemen who accompanied the mission of Captain Harris to the court of *Shoa*.

The Embassy, besides their unconscious contribution to the treasures of Abyssinian art, had also honoured *Sahale Salasee*, the then reigning monarch, with a portrait of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The descendant of Solomon, who, from the valuable presents he received, thought England an El Dorado and her people magicians, justly appreciated the likeness of the distinguished Sovereign. In the Penetralia of the palace at *Ankobar*, where none but the privileged few dared to venture, the royal portrait lay securely guarded amidst the regalia of the Ethiopian Empire till the death of the despot. His heir and successor, *Haile Malakot*, to atone for some indiscretion, presented it in pious contrition to the Cathedral Church, and there the people flock on all grand festivities to worship it as the representation of the Virgin Mary.

In the afternoon we had an animated and lengthened discussion with priests, debterahs, and lay people, on the subject of pictures and their idolatrous tendency. The majority acknowledged the sinfulness of this practice, though at the same time they sought, by a few stupid and senseless excuses, such as the ignorance of the people, and their want of acquaint-

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ance with Scripture history, to palliate this wilful transgression of the second commandment.

Our visit to *Avorno* was returned by eighteen adults and Jerusalim, their Shum or civil chief of the district—a *Baal Kamees*, or nobleman by rank. We asked them many questions about their history and settlement, but all they knew was the old fable that Menilek, the son of the Queen of Sheba by Solomon, brought them to Abyssinia. Not wishing to dilate on this unprofitable topic, we diverged to another—the end and aim of the law. Like the Jews in Europe, they cherished the fanciful notion that by adhering to certain observances and ritual ceremonies, they were keeping the law and justified before God. That the design of the moral and civil polity revealed to Moses on Sinai and in the wilderness, was to wean the people from idolatry, and, by a long array of types, impressive ceremonies, and significant rites, to prepare them for the reception of a more ennobling, more spiritual, and more holy faith, even that of the Gospel, had never been heard among them; and consequently they were not a little amazed when we told them that God, as their King, Benefactor and Deliverer, gave them regulations for their temporal conduct; and, as their final Judge, precepts to define the heinousness of sin, the necessity of an atonement, and that too not an atonement consisting in the blood or life of a slaughtered animal, but an expiation like that of the Redeemer, who, by sustaining our guilt, satisfied Divine justice, and supplied us with the means for the renovation of our fallen

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nature, and continual progress in holiness. We t
pointedly adverted to their sacrifices, and from D
xii. plainly showed them that they were not c
interdicted, but were actually sinful in a place
chosen by God. Some captious Christian *debter*
now wanted to show their polemical acumen, b
promptly silenced them by asking whether they
their Church believed in the New Testament? (
debterah, Salasee, a quiet, humble, and I tr
enlightened man, quickly retorted, "We hav
peculiar faith." "Then," returned I, "if you ha
peculiar faith, it cannot be that of the Gospel; an
it is not of the Gospel, it is false!" They admit
the justice of the censure, and without further in
ruption listened most attentively to our conversat
with the Jews.

On the following morning, very early, *Debte*
Negousee, the teacher at *Avorno,* together with
other *Falashas,* entered our room. Their sad
desponding looks were an unmistakable index of
unfavourable tidings they had to communicate.
long pause, during which nothing but their de
drawn sighs were audible, made me unwittingly sm
and in a cheering tone I said, "Don't be afraid
unburden your hearts, if you have no message
exile, prison, or immediate execution." My c
apparent confidence imparted courage to our visit
and they told us that their people had sent th
to ascertain from us personally, the truth of
rumour, that we wanted to make the *Falashas* Ch
tians per force, "for if that statement is corre

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they added, "we are commissioned to inform you that every Jew and Jewess will resist, even to death, the faintest attempt at coercion; but if, on the contrary, (and they will believe your words,) you have come to teach them truths that can be proved from God's Word, they will gratefully listen to your instructions." We gave our unqualified denial to this report, which savoured of the intolerant *Amhara*, and in return requested them to inform the Jews that we could not, would not, and dared not, as we were strangers, use violence towards any one of his Majesty's subjects; nay, more, they might solemnly aver in our name, that, if all the *Falashas* were ready and willing to be baptized, we would not administer that sacred rite to a single individual without previous instruction and unmistakable evidences of conviction and conversion. They were delighted with the reply, and promised to report what we had said to all their people.

On the same day, at nine a.m., we rode to *Defatsha*, a village an hour's distance east of *Gondar*, inhabited by about forty *Falasha* families. The morning was beautifully cool, and every object, from the simple hut of the peasant to the desolate castle of the King, looked attractive in the roseate hues of the sun. A substantial building, surmounted by a solid tower, which stood in melancholy isolation to the left of our road, formed the only sad sight in this illuminated panorama. Our guides told us that this edifice in the days of Abyssinia's bygone splendour and prosperity, contained the apartments of the *Waizoros*, (

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princesses, and was connected with the palace by a private park, in which royalty sought release from



the cares and troubles of empire. Its lonely position favours the conjecture, and there is every reason to believe that in the deep embrasures of the massive wall, where carrion-feeding birds now make their nests, the dark beauties and voluptuous princesses of Ethiopia once inhaled the perfume of fragrant shrubs, or indolently enjoyed the soft mountain breeze, during the noonday heat.

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Passing by the *Gimp* and several churches, we threaded our way down a shelving path to the river *Angareb;* and climbing an almost perpendicular rock on the opposite bank, we reached the village of which we were in quest. To our disappointment, most of the men were either absent in the field or at work in *Gondar:* happily the *Falasha* women do not share the bigotry of their superstitious sisters in other lands, and as they gladly flocked around us, we soon had an orderly and very respectable audience. On a parapet before the *mesquid*, where, contrary to ritual injunction, we had alighted, sat, immovable as a statue, a strange and impressive specimen of the Jewish monkish fraternity.

To the horror and disgust of this apparent automaton, we seated ourselves on the same wall, though not near enough to the *santon* to pollute him by our profane touch. Without any exordium or preliminary conversation, frequently so necessary even among semi-barbarians, we asked the holy man, why he had assumed the attire of a monk, since in the Hebrew Scriptures monasticism was indirectly, if not directly, prohibited by the injunction that the priest should be a married man. With a mingled expression of scorn and perplexity, the ascetic piously replied, "Among the children of Israel there have been monks ever since Aaron the high-priest instituted the order." "Ah, monoxy," (monk,) was our rejoinder, "we greatly fear that you are better acquainted with the deserts in which you have wandered than with God's Word, which you ought to have studied; for if

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you had devoted your idle time to that profitable subject, you would have discovered that Aaron was a married man, and had sons who succeeded him in the office of the priesthood." He was evidently crest-fallen, and gazed at us through his hollow eyes with an expression of wonder and incredulity, which men of a fiery and untamed temper, in eastern as well as African climes, instantly assume when a startling truth flashes on their slumbering faculties. From the monk we turned to the interesting assemblage before us, and in plain and simple language expounded to them the truths of the Gospel. The wonderful story of our Lord's humanity, suffering and death visibly affected them all, but particularly one old woman, who, unable to restrain her emotion, sprung up suddenly, and in accents of thrilling eloquence exclaimed, "Oh, how great is our guilt, that we reject love so divine and despise blood so precious!" Even the old monk felt the fervour of these words, for he gravely told us that he was quite sure that Deut. xviii. 15, referred to Christ, and that he and his brethren must be labouring under a great mistake, in depending more on their own works and asceticism than on God's love and mercy, as revealed in the Bible.

We next visited the Falasha village *Antonius*. On our way we took a stroll through an extensive garden, which sheltered, in venerable groves and tangled shrubberies, the ruins of a well-built ancient residence. Close to the walls of this decaying abode of royalty, stands a cupola-shaped chamber, the monument of *Fasilidas*' beloved war horse. When *Cyrilus*, the

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late Copt Patriarch, visited Abyssinia, as Ambassador of the Viceroy of Egypt, he tauntingly asked his



retinue of priests, monks and *debterahs*, whether that horse, which had a monument in a country where martyrs and confessors lacked gravestones, was the chief saint in their calendar—a sarcasm which the ecclesiastics who heard it will never forgive.

We did not linger long in this charming retreat, where African princes once emulated the effeminate

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luxuries of Oriental despots, but hastened up to *Quosquam*, where, on the brow of a commanding hill, *Fasilidas* had reared another palace, on which civil war and misgovernment have since traced their desolating characters. Through a broad vestibule, flanked on each side by a lofty solid tower, we entered a spacious hall built of stone, and ornamented with coloured porcelain tiles. Smaller chambers are attached to its sides, but their unsightly condition did not invite minute inspection. A strong wooden portal conducted us from the castle into a famous church, built by the pious *Iteghe Montouab*, the friend of Bruce. This sacred edifice is of very superior construction, and lies in the sombre shade of a juniper plantation. The most extravagant expenditure seems to have been unsparingly lavished on its interior. The partition walls of the several corridors are one mass of bright colours and rich gilding. The saints too, which are here well represented, besides the usual quantity of paint, have fanciful arabesque ornaments of silver encrusted in their dress, and coronets of pure gold around their enormous heads. The pious princess, not content with the costly structure, also munificently provided for the support of a good staff of officiating ecclesiastics. By some mistake, however, the whole patronage of her richly endowed livings became vested in a few powerful families; and these invariably, to the prejudice of the less influential priests, recruit every vacancy in the clerical garrison from the members of their own immediate circle. The church,

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it is true, does not suffer from this abuse of confidence, for the poor confessor, as well as the wealthy dignitary, are alike unworthy of their vocation, and the church is to both a mere stepping-stone to a life of comparative indolence.

The cool lawns of *Quosquam* might have tempted us to protract our stay during the sultry heat of the day, but, as we had still to pay our friends at *Antonius* a visit, we again vaulted into our saddles, and in another half-hour were midway up a steep wooded mountain ridge, on which hangs, securely nestled, the quiet *Falasha* village. Seating ourselves on a fragment of dislodged rock, beneath an artificial terrace, on which the never-absent tainted hut for the impure was erected, we awaited the assembling of the people. It being Friday, when every one must be at home to prepare for the Sabbath, groups of men and women, wrapped in their holiday attire, soon collected on the uneven and stony space before us. As in other places, so also in this settlement, we plainly stated our design, and the motives which actuated us in our efforts. They unanimously declared, "We believe it! We believe it!" Touched by the confidence they placed in our simple declaration, we affectionately and faithfully exposed their fatal error, in believing that a few legal observances and external rites were the worship due to God, or the sole object of the Law. The monument of Fasilidas' horse, discernible through the majestic trees and thickets, afforded an apt illustration, and, directing their dark and lustrous eyes towards it we said, "This memorial of a dead

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animal, you will admit, looks grand and beautiful from without; and yet, were you to remove its superincumbent weight of stones and mortar, you would find within only a rotten carcass, or the mouldering remains of bones: so also may a man be quite clean ceremonially, and yet within be full of malice, vice, and every repulsive sin." We then explained to them the nature of sin and its demerit, and seriously urged them to transfer their faith from mechanical rites to the living God, and from the Law which condemns, to the Gospel which saves the sinner. They all replied in a loud tone of voice, in which the clear sounds of the women could be distinctly discerned, "You tell us good words, and God hath evidently sent you to teach and direct us into the right path!" We inquired whether any of them could read, and to our surprise there was not one in this crowded village who could spell a single word. Poor people, they live almost in Pagan ignorance, and die in Pagan hopelessness! In going away I said, "You have now heard of a Saviour who died that all might eternally live, and whether you believe it or not, you will again hear of this matter; but mind, it may not be from the lips of a messenger of mercy, but from the lips of Him who now seeks your salvation, and who, if you now reject His proffered mercy, will then pronounce your eternal doom."

Whilst at *Gondar* we visited various personages of rank and dignity; amongst others *Atzee Yohannes*, the Shadow King, and according to Abyssinian annals, the legitimate successor to the throne, and lineal

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descendant of Solomon by the Queen of Sheba's son.* He was seated on an *alga* in a dirty little room, with a monk's skull-cap on his head, reading the Psalms. He asked me many questions on geography, and unlike the majority of Abyssinian savans, did not believe that beyond Jerusalem the sun never shone, and that only serpents and other venomous reptiles occupied the untenanted land. His belief in the saving efficacy of a shaven crown, of fasts and penances, he carefully avoided to discuss; as if conscious that the false system of belief in the Abyssinian Church could not stand the test of Scripture. From the abode of royalty, myself and companion threaded our way through a maze of broken and unpaved lanes to the Church of *Kudus Michael*, to inspect a rare and handsome Ethiopic manuscript. One of the *debterahs* attached to the church, conducted us to a small room, a kind of vestry for the officiating ministers, whilst he went for the manuscript; but a few minutes in this adjunct to the sanctuary, inflicted on us such torments, that to the amusement of several priests, we hastily beat a retreat.

Having never witnessed a full Abyssinian service, I repaired, on the feast of St. Anastasius, with some of the *Aboona's* servants, to the church which bears that saint's name, to witness a grand celebration. A

* I was told that whenever Atzee Yohannes visits King Theodoros, the latter stands before him, as an acknowledgment of his title to a crown, which he could not defend. He receives an annual pension from the royal treasury.

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steep tortuous path, bounded by a deep chasm on one side, and beetling rocks on the other, brought us to a beautiful greensward, where, in the shade of a venerable grove, stood the sacred building. Around it, although close to the capital, there was no sign of human life—not even a hut enlivened the gloom of a spot, where a hermit, or one disgusted and satiated with life's bustle and dissipation, might find the most picturesque retreat in which to speculate on the vanity of the past, and the hope that brightens the future. Before us, to the north, with their bold outlines clearly defined against a cloudless sky, lay in wild confusion the towering mountains of *Woggera*, overtopped by the cloud-capped cliffs of the hoary *Semien;* to the south-west spread the wide plains of *Dembea*, with its rich waving fields, numerous rivers and calm lake, bounded by the dark and distant mountains of *Godjam*, where the blue Nile has its source, and the *Galla* country abuts; whilst due west, and blending with the horizon's edge, extended to the very confines of the sandy desert, *Walkeit* and *Armatgioho*, diversified by hills and dales, jagged rocks and black ravines, through which foaming rivers precipitate their noisy waters over every impediment of nature, till they reach the *Atbara*, or are absorbed by the rich vegetation of the *kolla* (lowland), or the thirsty sands of the burning desert. The beauty and picturesqueness of this magic scene had so fascinated my attention, that I quite forgot the object which had brought me there, till the deafening tom-tom of the *negareet*, intermingled

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with the nasal chorus of a host of *debterahs*, in varying cadences, reverberated on my ear. This indication that the service had already begun, put a stop to our contemplation of this grand mountain scene, and in a most reverent mood we hastened to the uproarious sanctuary. A wooden gate in a circular wall brought us within an open grassy space that formed the cemetery, and the spot where, adjoining to the church, rises the Bethlehem in which the priests prepare the eucharistic bread. A crowd of men and women, as if in some place of amusement and dissipation, were spread in picturesque knots over the soft turf. The majority were busily plying their tongues, but I fear from the bursts of merriment which now and then broke from one or the other of those animated groups, that their conversations had very little to do either with religion or the service in honour of the saint. Not belonging to this impure class, who are justly excluded from the interior of the sacred edifice, we mounted a few steps, and then, through a partition occupied by the laity, stepped into a second compartment concentric with the outer one, and there found ourselves at the porch of the enclosure which constitutes the *sanctum sanctorum*. Crowds of priests and *debterahs* thronged the whole of that corridor. The *debterahs* constitute the choir in all their churches; and their devotionless mien, as they chanted to the monotonous sound of the *negareet* quite excited my indignation. During the maddening noise created by the *debterahs*, the priests, robed in gaudy canonicals, were exerting to the

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utmost their cracked voices in intoning the Liturg and Psalms. At certain intervals, an ecclesiasti clad in his garish finery, and attended by an incens waving boy-deacon, and a bearer of the Ethiopi Gospel, marched out of his sanctum into the ceme tery to edify the godless and profane multitude b reading to them a portion of Scripture in an u known tongue. A reverend gentleman near m who was evidently a great Church dignitary, as h wore a huge turban, and had a very stupid unmeanin face, pointed his gaunt fingers towards the daube walls, and condescendingly inquired whether I kne St. George and Miriam, the mother of God? bluntly rejoined, "Your St. George is a stolen fabl and Miriam is not the mother of God, but of th human nature of Jesus Christ who came in the flesh and is now seated at God's right hand; and if yo want my opinion, I know that God has said, Tho shalt not bow down to any image!" He wa silent, and amid the laughter of the *debterahs*, wh despise the haughty and ignorant priests, quitted th side of the unbeliever in picture-worship. My com panions wished me to stay and witness the admin istration of the *Corban*, or sacrament, but I ha already seen quite enough, and was therefore glad t get away from a service in which the Divine ha been utterly supplanted by the human, and tha which is ennobling and spiritual by all that is de grading and superstitious.

The *Corban*, or sacrifice to which I will her allude, is taught by the Abyssinian Church in h

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Haimanot Mysteer, or mysteries of faith, to be a real sacrifice, though few of her erudite *debterahs* and priests really admit the dogma. In the strange and incoherent summary of faith just spoken of, it is related, that once upon a time, a monk took it into his head to deny the material presence in the mass. The heterodoxy of the erring brother created a painful sensation, and the most profound among the community, strove by argument and entreaty to win him back to the true doctrines of the Church. Strong in his conviction, the monk impiously averred that, in spite of all sophistry, learning and threats, he would not accept a belief which his senses contradicted. Such invincible and impious blasphemy, the merciful priestly conclave might have rewarded with the prison and the rack, had not two of his former companions charitably solicited the suspension of the holy fathers' judgment for another week. The request granted, the two monks at once retired to a sacred desert place to fast and pray for their misguided friend. Their intercessions, though fervent and sincere, brought no illuminating rays into the benighted soul of the impenitent monk, and the two good men were already despairing of his life here, and happiness hereafter, when, on the day of their return from their vicarious pilgrimage, and while they were devoutly performing mass in the convent church, behold! the bread in the act of consecration suddenly changed into a beautiful infant, which, a radiant and resplendent angel, bearing the sword of Divine justice, sacrificed and carried up to heaven. Thus, their prayer was

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answered, and the heretical monk, who saw the miracle, became henceforth the most zealous and devout advocate of transubstantiation.

This absurd story the unlettered and unthinking regard as an incontestable proof that the bread and wine, under the manipulation of the priest, are converted into flesh and blood; but the erudite reject the legend, and, in their sentiments, approximate to the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation.

Unable to perform any religious rite, without the savage accompaniment of tinkling keys and other discordant sounds, the sacrament of the mass, the most solemn service of the Church, is also performed amidst the most confused and distracting clangour. The liturgy and consecration service over, all, except the communicants, leave the place of worship. These now approach the vestibule of the holy of holies, where the officiating priests, enveloped in clouds of incense, are busily occupied in washing their hands.* The water, which this act sanctifies, must not be spilled on the ground, but, as a regenerating emblem, it is sprinkled on the bended heads and garments of the faithful, whilst the priest says, "If you think that I have now cleansed your garments and purified your bodies, and yet continue to cherish hatred and malice in your hearts, I tell you that the body of Christ will prove to be a burning fire to consume you, and His blood a bottomless sea to drown you!" After this exhortation, the *tabot*, the substi-

* This ceremony is copied from Pilate's example. Matt. xxvii. 24.

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tute for the altar, is taken out of the holy of holies, and each communicant receives a small piece of wheaten bread and a spoonful of raisin wine. To prevent the desecration of the sacred elements, every one, before he quits the church, drinks a cup of water, and also abstains from expectorating that day. The disgraceful habits, engendered by a corrupt faith and depraved morals, have so polluted the mass of the natives, that very few dare partake of the sacrament. Most of the communicants are children—deacons, who have not yet shaken off the dews of boyhood—priests and monks, and here and there a few legally married couples; except these every one, whether governor or beggar, *dejatch* or *debterah*, or whatever his rank may be, is spiritually impure, and unfit to come to the *Corban*.

Fond of adopting Hebrew rites and ceremonies, the Abyssinians have also introduced into their Church a *tabot* or Jewish ark, instead of an altar or Lord's table. The apology for this deviation from the usage of all other Christian nations, they find in the belief that their country possesses the true ark of the covenant. To justify this assertion, they gravely aver that Menilek, the son of Solomon, by the Queen of Sheba, on leaving Jerusalem, solicited from his royal parent a present that would for ever link him to the land of his birth. The wise King, deeply affected by this language of filial affection, requested him to name the gift he prized. Menilek, like a good and modest son, reverentially declined to do so, upon which the King, who knew the desire of his heart,

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gave him the ark of the covenant. On the return of the prince to *Axum*, in *Tigré*, the invaluable treasure was deposited in a temple called *Debra Zion*, and there it has remained shut up from the gaze of the profane, and will so continue, till the advent of the great Theodoros, who is to restore it to its proper place in the future temple of Jerusalem.

In imitation of this imaginary ark the Abyssinians have a *tabot*, and not an altar in their churches. The form, size, and even the wood to be used in its construction are minutely specified by the canons. Its length must be about two feet and a-half, its breadth one foot, and its depth four inches. These particulars having been strictly attended to, the smooth board is consigned to the hands of an artist, who carves a large cross in the centre, and twelve smaller around the border, as emblematic representations of Christ and His apostles.

The *tabot* is now finished, but before it can be used it must be anointed and christened by the *Aboona*. At the baptism it generally receives the name of some venerated saint or guardian angel, and then this piece of wood, like a god, amidst the prostrate ranks of a devout and adoring congregation, is deposited in the holy of holies of the new church.

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CHAPTER XVI.

The Feast of the Cross—Grand Illumination—Sharp Reproof—Open-Air Assembly—Military occupation of *Gondar*—Solemn Confession—Sudden Arrival of the King—Grand Breakfast—Execution of Traitors—Immorality of *Gondar*—Biography of *Tecla Haimanot*—Trade of the Metropolis.

DURING our stay at Gondar we witnessed the celebration of *Mascal*—a grand feast devoted to the discovery of the Holy Cross by the mother of Constantine. The ceremonies commenced early in the evening by a merry procession of boys and girls, who traversed the streets begging wood and fagots for the midnight bonfires. A numerous gay party, of both sexes, also waited on me, not, as they artfully hinted to solicit my contribution towards the illumination, but to assure me that in honour of my visit, they would encircle *Kudus Gabriel* with a belt of fire that should blaze up to the heaven and eclipse the very stars in the firmament. Such a flaming demonstration in my favour, required a substantial acknowledgment in return, and to their delight, I emptied my whole stock of small money among them, which just amounted to ten pounds—not of gold, but of the Imperial currency—dirty black salt. As an expression of their gratitude they struck up an

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Ethiopian Hallelujah chorus that shook the very walls of our dwelling, and they would probably have favoured me with another grand performance, had I not urged them to collect more wood for the promised illumination. An hour past midnight the festivities began. The *debterahs*, who are the leaders in all religious solemnities, initiated the gaieties of the *fête* by open-air chants in praise of the Cross. Their voices, which are a torture when heard in the church, were not devoid of harmony on the hills, in the perfect stillness of the night. Roused from their slumbers by the strains of the singers, the whole population quitted their lairs, and in pious fervour mingled their own execrable screams with the voices of the trained choristers of the capital. Curious to witness the firing of the piles, I also left my couch of untanned hide and sallied forth to join the nocturnal assemblage. At the gate, a dazzling glare of torches and the shouts of a wild and tumultuous mob, drove me back to my domicile. The crowd, which could not have numbered less than four hundred persons, out of respect to the Aboona, inflicted on me, during an interminable half-hour, all the agonies of their abominable music. I might, it is true, have put the wall of the archiepiscopal palace between myself and these genuine Ethiopian serenaders, but as such an act would have been esteemed an unpardonable sin against the Cross, I was forced to submit, as gracefully as my ears permitted, to this hideous din. From the Aboona's residence the crowd rushed up the acclivities on which the beacons had been reared, and

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at a given signal over the heights in the rear of *Kudus Gabriel*, the torches were thrust into the heaps of wood, and, amidst the clashing of swords, the beating of *negareets*, and the crackling of the flames, the auspicious event of the finding of the *Mascal* was appropriately proclaimed.

On the same day two of my companions returned from a visit to the royal camp, eight hours distant from *Gondar*, whither I had been prevented from accompanying them. The King, as ever, was very kind, and to their inquiries as to the locality where we might settle in case we established a Mission, promptly replied, "On the spot you deem most eligible." On the eve of the *Mascal* the European visitors were with others invited to the royal tent. His Majesty designedly allowed the conversation to turn on religious topics. Among the questions suggested, the inquiry arose whether it was right or wrong to fast. To this the missionaries replied that fasting became sinful if regarded as a meritorious and justifying work, because it then supplanted the atoning blood and imputed righteousness of the Redeemer. "True," rejoined the King, and then, turning to some of the higher ecclesiastics, among whom was the Etcheque, the second dignitary in the Church, he asked them whether a certain story about Peter was contained in the New Testament. Upon receiving an affirmative reply, he turned to Messrs. Bronkhorst and Flad, and inquired whether the priests were correct. My friends, unwilling as they were to distress the ecclesiastics, dared not refuse to satisfy the royal interrogator. His

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the Saviour for its value; and that thus when Christ came, men were prepared for His appearance, and looking for His coming. For more than an hour we uninterruptedly expounded to them the great doctrine of Divine revelation, from the Fall to the Cross—from the Curse to the Redemption. All were deeply impressed with what they heard, but particularly some young men, who, in imploring accents entreated us to remain in Abyssinia, and teach them to know the Saviour. More than a hundred and fifty persons accompanied us a short distance, and we were already far down the steep declivity, when from many a torn and jagged cliff, the echoes rung with their grateful blessings.

On reaching home we found the gates closed, and guarded by a file of soldiers who refused us admittance. On inquiry, we learned that the King had been informed that fire-arms were concealed in *Gondar*, which his disaffected subjects sold to the rebels, and that this had induced him to invest the capital, and every house and church, with a strong military force. Not feeling disposed to lodge in the street, we applied to the *Cantiba*, or military governor of the metropolis, who immediately gave orders that we and our servants should have free ingress and egress to our house, on condition that nothing, not even a salt, should be removed from the premises.

Next morning one of the *debterahs* from the village *Defatsha* called on us for a Bible. He spoke most seriously, and like an anxious enquirer said in tremulous nervousness, as if his soul was agitated to its

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utmost depth, " Before your arrival here no one to
that we were in the wrong; we had our *Oreed* (
tateuch) and David, we observed the Sabbath,
the priests their tithes, and so thought all was
that the Christians with their idols, Miriam an
saints, could have a superior, more scriptural,
more spiritual faith, was quite out of the que
but now God hath sent you to teach us, and I
we shall all profit by your instructions."

To the surprise and terror of all *Gondar*,
Majesty, quite unexpectedly, and long before
inhabitants were astir, arrived in the capital.
formably to Abyssinian etiquette, we went t
palace, to attend, if I may so term it, the royal l

The avenues leading to the *Gimp*, although it
still early, were already occupied by a vast conc
of all professions except the *debterahs*, who are k
to cherish no particularly loyal feeling to the t
of Theodoros. Beggars of course abounded i
throng, and from the strong expressions they
ployed, it was evident that their matitudinal levy
not been very successful. It required great e
and tact to steer through the ranks of these p
extortioners who assailed one from all sides, a
the name of every saint in the calendar soli
charity. Without regard to the whining blessin
angry curses of these lazy vagabonds, we pushe
and reached in safety the Imperial residence.
ante-rooms leading to the audience-chamber, w
since the days of *Fasilidas* had evidently not
the luxury of a broom, were tolerably well filled

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host of perspiring courtiers. The poor men, clad in their suffocating silken and damask shirts, looked so woe-begone and ill-at-ease that, instead of the noble and brave of the land, they might have been mistaken for criminals, condemned in derision of some dark crime to expiate their faults in garbs of the opposite hue.

Their semi-nude retainers sweltering in an exuberance of musked grease, if they could have appreciated their bliss, might well have blessed the humble lot which exempted them from the excruciating torments of an aristocratic *Kamees*. We had not to wait long before we were requested to enter the grand hall. The King, who was reclining on a large antique four-footed bedstead overhung with rich silks and costly brocade, sat up at our approach, and most cordially saluted us. Hospitality towards strangers being an Abyssinian virtue, though in general very sparingly practised, His Majesty ordered us a substantial morning repast. A band of *Gallas* who were standing like bronze statues close to the walls, instantly vanished to execute the royal behest. Unlike fashionable banquets, an Ethiopian entertainment neither involves much expense, nor requires much labour or skill. A large wicker basket full of leathery teff cakes, a sooty saucepan, consecrated to a sham currie sauce of dubious colour and more dubious ingredients, and an abundance of gory joints cut reeking from the fresh-slaughtered animal, constitute the delicacies that grace both the board of the King, and the festive revel of the peasant. On

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the present occasion, in deference to our corrupt taste, some savoury pieces of meat were held over the fire, not to be regularly broiled, but merely to impart to them a flavour of the smoking embers. The slaves who, in lieu of dishes, performed that useful office, looked so formidable as they swung the dripping joints over our heads, that, during the whole of our repast, I could only think of the sword of Damocles. Courtesy necessarily required that we should do justice to the royal hospitality, and although our palate strongly protested against the task imposed, we were obliged to masticate the hard flesh and to gulp down the choking peppery sauce, with apparent relish. His Majesty asked us many questions about the *Falashas*, and appeared quite pleased to hear that they were anxious for the Word of God, and willing to be instructed. He expressed some anxiety to have a good number of Europeans, particularly artisans, to instruct his people. I thought this a favourable opportunity for reminding him that in Europe we had many bad characters, and that I cherished the hope that those who came to Abyssinia would introduce our virtues and not our vices. "May God realize your good wish," was the response.

Business of importance induced me the following morning to repair again to the palace. The King was just about to leave *Gondar*, and that too, as I understood from the ominous and suppressed whispers of the people, in no very good temper. This change in his deportment from that of the previous day, was attributed to the discovery of several muskets and

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other property, belonging to a rebel chief. Two monks, a *debterah* and a priest charged with secreting them, were, without trial and without shrift, condemned to immediate death. The furious monarch, to strike terror into the hearts of his rebellious subjects, ordered the criminals to have their hands and feet cut off; and so stern were his commands, that not even a drop of water was allowed them in their feverish death-struggle. I had no inclination to intrude on the despot while he was in such a mood, but went to Mr. Bell, with whom I spent a pleasant half-hour. On parting, he told me that our next meeting would be either in *Tigré* or *London*, to which latter place he was expecting to accompany an Abyssinian embassy. The poor man little dreamed that Death had already marked him for his own, and that this bright hope of revisiting his native land, after a voluntary exile of more than twenty years, was never to be realized. *Requiescat in pace.*

The population of *Gondar*, which may be estimated at about six thousand souls, consists almost exclusively of priests, merchants, and a few artisans. The general character of the inhabitants, notwithstanding a loud religious profession, is not in particular repute, and the grossest offence committed by a resident in the metropolis is palliated by the sarcastic remark, "Oh, he lives at *Gondar*." This low state of morality in a place where one at least out of every ten males is an ecclesiastic, does not sound very creditable to the turbaned reverends, or the creed they profess. It is true there is no lack of churches

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Menilek, was born in *Shoa* about the middle of the 13th century. On the day of his mother's marriage the unbelieving *Gallas* (the legend says) made an irruption into the province, and, by some mishap, the pious lady fell into the power of the invaders, who made her a captive. The transcendent loveliness of the Christian turned the whole army distraught, and the stoutest warrior strove more sedulously to win a smile from the beautiful captive than trophies from the enemy. King *Matolama*, the commander of the invading forces, on hearing that a poor slave had bewitched the hearts and paralyzed the arms of all his brave troops, ordered her to be conducted into his presence, then and there to receive the punishment due to her art. The hapless captive went forth, enshrouded in her striped *shama*, to exchange a sorrowful life for a martyr's bliss. Her seductive charms were no sooner unveiled to the admiring gaze of the sovereign, than he saw that her magic lay in the lustre of a rich eye, and the grace of a faultless form. Susceptible of beauty, like every other prince, *Matolama* fell desperately in love with his *Amhara* captive. His suit, though ardent and sincere, was repelled with meekness and dignity. Skilled in the knowledge of the female heart, the prince abstained from all further importunity, and assiduously betook himself to gain by kindness a love which he could not command by force. Gentle treatment from a king, few female hearts, the chronicler adds, can resist, and to this rule the amiable *Amhara* formed no exception. Her distress had already lasted many a month, but whether she was sub-

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dued by grief or won by tender solicitation, it is not stated, nor is the omission of great importance; suffice it for us to know that she became reconciled to her fate, and was prepared to resign herself to idolatry and the enamoured *Matolama*.

The auspicious day at length approached. People at a very early hour began to flock into the royal city to witness the happy nuptials of their beloved king and his beauteous Christian captive. The idol-temple in which the ceremony was to be performed, was adorned with garlands and flowers, culled from the remotest forests and glens of the empire. There was dancing and singing in every street, and in every house, except in the poor bride's chamber. Awakened from her stupor of sorrow, the poor helpless captive shed bitter tears of penitential contrition, at the thought of her approaching infidelity to a youthful spouse and the paternal creed. In her misery and distraction she called on Mary and all the other great saints her memory could recall, but no help came, no succouring hand was extended towards her. The approach of the nuptial hour, so impatiently anticipated by her lover, was indicated to herself by the shadow of her own wan figure; and, before she could make her choice between an idolatrous husband or a violent death, she was lifted on the shoulders of happy female slaves, and borne in great pomp to the heathen temple. Priests arrayed in costly robes at once commenced the ceremony, when suddenly the roof of the edifice burst open, and an angel, gorgeously arrayed, appeared in the midst of the terror-stricken crowd, and, lifting

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the trembling princess on his outspread wings, he safely carried her to the land of her birth and the home of her desolate lord.

Some time after this happy reunion the pious couple were blessed with a son. The infant who was destined to swell the ranks of the celestial nobility, came into the world accompanied by extraordinary signs and prodigies. A glorious light rested for several days over the parental house. At the baptism of the child, the priest was so dazzled by its supernatural beauty, that, lost in admiration, he dropped the babe, and might have killed it, had not an invisible hand kept it suspended above the hard floor. These and many similar signs were, as the wise men of those days pointed out, sure indications of the babe's glorious future career. The infant, as predicted, grew up to be a pious, clever, and faultless youth. His fame as a preacher very soon spread far and wide, and high and low came from the remotest provinces to sit at the feet of the wonderful evangelist. Among the ladies of Ethiopia, his handsome person and unequalled talent excited quite a spirit of rivalry; but, despite their deep sighs and heart-melting glances, he most relentlessly persevered in obstinate celibacy. His mother now came to the aid of a despairing wealthy maiden, and, in an affectionate and supplicatory tone, she entreated him, by taking to himself a pious wife, to soothe her own declining days with the love and attentions of a good daughter. Not willing to disobey a command of the decalogue, the devout youth sought refuge from the snare by which he was beset in a convent at *Debra Damo*, in

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Tigré, where he solemnly assumed the skull-cap of the monk. The mortifications, self-imposed penances, and incredibly long fasts which followed his initiation into the monastic brotherhood, are faithfully recorded in the annals of the Church for the edification of the faithful.

Wearied at length with this mode of life, *Tecla Haimanot* took the monk's staff, and set out on a perilous pilgrimage to the tomb of the Saviour. Many unfortunate adventures happened to him among the unbelieving Moslems, but he resignedly submitted to every ill-treatment which men and fiends could inflict upon him. Having prayed at the holy sepulchre, he retraced his steps to Egypt, where the Copt Patriarch ordained him priest. He now intended to devote himself to the conversion of the followers of the false prophet, but the Patriarch, who did not wish to share the martyrdom for which the young priest so ardently longed, requested him to spend his zeal on a people more worthy of the Gospel than the Christian-hating Arabs. Obedience to a superior being a virtue he always practised, he at once wrapped around his emaciated frame his old skin cloak, and proceeded to the *Galla* country, where his mother had been kept prisoner. The idea of rewarding good for evil was so novel to these idolaters, that, in thronging multitudes, they repaired to the spot where the reputed son of the lady who had so miraculously escaped from the power of their late king was about to preach. His zealous efforts were most signally blessed in the conversion of hundreds of thousands who had never

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before heard the name of Christ. The king and most of his subjects, who in a very short time had thrown their idols to the bats and moles, were anxious that the good man should settle down amongst them: but a desire to reform certain abuses at *Debra Damo* forbade him to accept the grateful invitation.

The fame of the great achievements of *Aboona Tecla Haimanot* had by this time spread through the length and breadth of the land, and wherever he came, old and young, sick and whole, prostrated themselves in the dust before his feet, and implored his benediction. At *Debra Damo* the brotherhood did not much sympathize in the general jubilee that greeted the austere monk. The monastery there stands on the summit of a perpendicular rock, and, being quite inaccessible, no visitor can reach it unless drawn up by a rope. The Evil One, probably, I presume, jealous of his own, did not like the ascetic to tamper with the merry fellows on the rock, and, to effect his wicked purpose, he maliciously cut the frail support when *Tecla Haimanot* was in mid-air, and probably he would have been dashed to pieces in a ravine below, had not immediately six wings unfurled themselves under his garb and borne him aloft. In commemoration of this miraculous volant power, the saint is represented, in most of the churches dedicated to him, as nearly smothered in a profusion of gorgeous plumage.

The passion for self-discipline and maceration in which he had indulged in early life, became more intense as he advanced in years. Tenantless wastes and malarious jungles had lost their attractions, nor

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was it quite *en règle* that a man, who aspired beatification, should visit spots that were the r of inferior mortals. In this perplexity he hit an original idea of mortifying the flesh. There *Shoa* a small lake, which the saint in his per nations had often passed. To these waters he repaired. The good people, who followed him all parts to hear his discourses and to obtain blessing, entreated him not to expose his precious son to the alligators and other aquatic monsters; the holy man, who knew that all his exploits fo glory of the church had not yet been accomplis fearlessly stepped into the deep. Seven succe years he continued in the water, and probabl would have expired on his liquid couch, had not of his legs dropped off. The clamour for this valu relic created quite a dissension in the church, the monarch judiciously put a stop to the fierce between the rival claimants, by ordering it tc kept as a Palladium in the royal metropolis. sacred talisman possesses more wonderful sani virtues than all the drugs in the universe. Patic from every province of the country, visit the sh to make votive offerings and to quaff the hea waters in which the saint's leg is weekly was Many of the sufferers are of course disappointe their hope of a cure; but then the fault is not in relic, but in their own want of faith.

These and similar legends have literally supplan the Gospel of Christ, and introduced through Abyssinia a mythology very little at variance with

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idolatry of Pagans, whom the Abyssinians most devoutly hate and persecute. Faith in Christ is virtually a subordinate article in their creed, nor would a doctrine so free, pure, and salutary suit the rapacious cupidity of the mercenary priests. The Virgin, St. Michael, *Tecla Haimanot*, *Aboo*, and a legion of other notabilities, are the gods and demi-gods they laud, and the shrines on which the liberal offerings of credulous superstition are deposited. Their everlasting cry in church and out of church is, "Give! give!" This sordid craving for the possession of temporal things without labour, is the chief motive that induces many to adopt the priestly vocation, and is also the chief study of the priest's whole life. The vast preponderance of conscientious over reckless sinners, has given rise to an equally proportionate demand for absolution. To meet the requirements of these sensitive scoundrels, the priests have been compelled to analyse every imaginable human frailty, in order to determine its relative sinfulness; and now the most consummate debauchee needs only to disburse a sufficient largesse to his confessor, and he can fearlessly pursue his depraved tastes.

The merchants of *Gondar*, next to the clergy and aristocracy, form the most wealthy and influential body in the land. Their trade is very considerable. The exports from the capital to *Massowah* and *Matamma*, realize per annum about sixty thousand Maria Theresa dollars; but if the roads were better and the political state of the country more satisfactory, this sum might easily be trebled. Caravans for

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Massowah start about October, and return again in May, before the rainy season sets in, and the trade with *Matamma* is restricted to the same period. The imports for home consumption and the southern *Galla* marts, comprise a variety of articles, but the staple commodities are white, blue, and red calicoes, coarse muslins, chintz, cotton velvets, common cutlery, glass beads, and Indian spices. Shops there are none at *Gondar*, nor would it be possible for the merchant to expose his goods for public inspection, in a place frequently subject to the depredations of rival rebel chiefs. The interior and most secluded recess in the house is used as a shop; and there, only the privileged purchaser, and that as a particular favour, can gain admittance. Less distinguished persons, if they want a little spice or a few yards of muslin, must go to the market on Saturday, or apply to a broker, as no regular *Negad* will attend to their orders. A small portion of the goods imported are purchased by the great chiefs, the King, and the stall-keepers at the different markets, but the rest is sent to *Godjam*, where the *Gallas* from the south come to exchange their gold, civet, ivory and coffee, for the produce of India, and the manufactures of England and Germany. The profits, I have been assured, are enormous; and if the spirit of enterprise were commensurate with the resources of the country, and the industry of the people with the undeveloped treasures that lie hidden in its rich soil and valuable mines, Abyssinia might, ere long, despite many natural obstacles, have a flourishing trade and a considerable increase of wealth.

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CHAPTER XVII.

Departure from *Gondar*—Bivouac in the Field—Morning in the Tropics—A Sabbath Congregation—An Epicure's Repast—The Youthful Students—A pert Woman—Benighted in the Jungle—A new Version of Man's Creation—Interview with the *Falasha* High-Priest—Affecting Prayer—Appalling Passage—The Domain of the *Aboona*—Magic Powers.

We had now been nineteen days at *Gondar*, and not thinking it advisable to protract our stay, we set out again on our missionary journey. Our route was west-south-west across the hills which, like Cyclopean embattlements, encompass *Gondar*. At *Assaso*, a suburb, an hour's distance from the metropolis, there are still some gardens and a church which remind the vain Abyssinian of the superiority of the Franks, who saved Ethiopia from the yoke of Islamism, but injudiciously endeavoured to impose on her the no less detested manacles of Popery. We here re-arranged our books, which pressed heavily on the saddleless backs of our mules, and then through a steep and narrow defile pushed on to *Maneger Gabriel*, a hamlet hidden in a forest of acacias, wanza, worka, and other tropical trees and plants. We had some difficulty in extricating our feet from the rank weeds and tangled parasites, which every-

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where barred our onward progress. Bruis bleeding, we reached the Shum's hut, and t a field of pumpkins, we cleared a small sp our tent. After a supper of excellent mil an abundance of vegetables, a luxury we h enjoyed for many weeks, we retired to rest reclining on soft grass and aromatic herbs, s defiance of mosquitoes and hyenas, quite as s in the African wilderness as we could have d the most luxurious chamber in the heart of c Europe.

With the first streaks of day we were morning devotions; we then drank a cup of coffee (the luxury of sugar being unkno Abyssinia), and thus strengthened and refres body and spirit, we started again on unknow unbeaten tracks. Our score of servants were expeditious as ourselves. A large pot of pe pumpkins was still on the fire, and till th devoured they moved about as if their fee paralyzed and their hands palsied. Had w pressed for time, we should have ordered th stow their repast into a skin, and eat it on the but as we had to visit a *Falasha* village in the bourhood, it would have been wanton cruelty them away from the bubbling and seething pot

There is something cheering and inexpressibl sant in a tropical morning on the highlands of sinia, more particularly so when, as in ou gratitude swells the breast, and hallowed vision the mind. Isolation and loneliness are then c

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forgotten, and one hurries, without any sensation of fatigue, to the places mapped out for the day's toil. The balmy air, and the lovely landscapes which, as in a panorama, float in rapid succession before the enraptured sight, preclude any desire for rest, until noon approaches, and a meridian sun hushes every breath, and drives man and beast to seek shelter from its fiery blaze.

The *Falasha* village, Gabriel, towards which our steps were bent, was quite invisible, and we almost doubted whether we were pursuing the right path, when at length we perceived groups of dark figures, veiled in clean white *shamas*, seated on the brow of a hill. A considerable stir was noticeable among these groups, and as if they were anticipating some extraordinary visitors, every eye rested on us in wondering interest. The usual salutations having been interchanged, we inquired for their priest, and though the people thought that he would not leave the *mesquid* on the Sabbath, to our satisfaction he soon hastened to the green sward on which we had taken our seat, escorted by scores of men, women, and children. The poor man, whose emaciated figure, cadaverous countenance, and sunken eyes, indicated severe castigations and self-inflicted sufferings, gazed in astonishment at us, as we told him we had come to announce tidings calculated to give peace to the troubled heart, and light, and hope, and joy to the gloom of the despairing soul. "Your words are good," he said, and then, as if anxious to cheer the desolation of the present by a retrospect of the fond past, he dilated on the miracu-

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lous history of Israel, their migration to Egypt, their subsequent exodus, their remarkable preservation, and the numerous Divine interpositions in their behalf; but suddenly remembering that exile and dispersion must be the consequence of sin and apostasy, he made an abrupt pause, and emphatically added, "We shall yet be restored again." We fully admitted the restoration of Israel, and pointed out the future glory of Jerusalem; but temporal promises, we also reminded them, could not satisfy the expectations of future bliss. To ensure this, we told them that each one of them must be convinced that he has transgressed God's law, broken His covenant, and deserved His curse; for unless he feels this, no message of mercy can pierce his hard heart, or make him sensible of his danger. When, however, his conscience is alarmed, and unexpiated guilt shrouds his future in gloom, then God's Word comes to his aid, and in its precious pages he will find Him in whom each type has its antitype, each ceremony its significance, and each prophecy its fulfilment; thus he will learn that when all was ruined and lost, and the whole world heaved and throbbed with anguish and pain, infinite compassion expiated finite guilt, and the human was redeemed by the Divine. These and other grand truths, which constitute the theme of revelation, formed the chief topics of our discourse, and from the audible groans and sighs, which involuntarily burst from the heart of many a one in that assembly of more than two hundred persons, I could see that our words fell, in part at least, on willing and impressible hearts.

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We gave them a Bible, in which we marked various passages, such as Deut. xviii., Psalm li., Isaiah liii., for their prayerful study and consideration.

And now we are off again; and along upland glades, murmuring brooks, and shady groves, where an ornithologist might in a short time have made a splendid collection, we hasten on to another *Falasha* settlement. Our long discourse, coupled with a ride of several hours, without food, had, however, exhausted our strength, and as it was now one o'clock, and a picturesquely-situated hamlet gleamed through the cool Arcadian shades, we halted, and on bread and clotted milk, washed down by draughts of excellent water fresh from a sparkling fountain, made a breakfast an epicure might have envied. Our inquiry for the *Falasha* village excited the curiosity of the peasants, and several volunteered to be our guides. Our servants being unacquainted with the road, we willingly accepted this unsolicited service, and across shady vales and rich alluvial fields, where a few half-naked ploughmen, and their no less scantily clothed wives and daughters were busily engaged, rode up to *Ismance*, a village embowered in the refreshing gloom of many a gnarled and lofty tree. It was now about four p.m., and as the people were asleep, and the priests in the *mesquid*, a stillness and silence that was quite oppressive pervaded the lonely settlement. Our guides loudly called several persons by name, but their Sabbath siesta was so sound and free from care, that it required the greatest exertions of their lungs to rouse the heavy slumberers. At last

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one, and then another, and then a third, and so on, like apparitions conjured up by the wand of a magician, appeared at their doors wrapped in their white shroud-like *shamas*, and stared with a bewildered gaze on the disturbers of their Sabbath dreams. Not being allowed to enter their huts (a most salutary law in Abyssinia, where swarms of all kinds of moving and creeping things share the abode with their human inmates), we summoned those whom we had roused to join us under the trees. They readily complied, and to this attentive assembly of about ten adults and a monk-priest, we proclaimed Christ and Him crucified. The monk, who had listened with interest and undivided attention, thought himself called upon to make some remark, but as he knew not what to say, he pointed at me, and with an incredulous expression observed, "I love you, for you are holy." I told him that he was mistaken, and if he read the Bible he would find on the very first page of inspiration that man was fallen and corrupt, and could only be sanctified by the power of the Spirit, and saved by the interposition of the Redeemer. He became very serious, and promised to call on us the next morning.

The violet and purple tints in which hill and grove began now to glow, reminded us that the sun was rapidly descending towards the horizon; and as we had still another *Falasha* village to visit, we bade our friends farewell, and proceeded to *Shelloh*. Our time being limited, we picketed our mules in the grass, and, contrary to *Falasha* prejudices, went straight to the

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mesquid, where, in a court adjoining, a number of young men were engaged in reading the Scriptures in the *Ethiopic* tongue. We joined these devout students, and were soon absorbed in an earnest discussion on the eternal topic of ceremonial observances. We easily disposed of their queries by telling them, that the very laws on which they placed their hope were proofs of their fall and ruin; for if man had not sinned, the intercourse between the Creator and creature would never have been interrupted, but, as the reverse was the case, the impure and polluted could no longer have *communion* with the holy and pure, and thus he had received a law which was at once to remind him that he was polluted, and so required to be purified—that he was a transgressor, and must have an expiatory sacrifice. They thought they possessed this, and we had some difficulty in convincing them that an irrational animal could not atone for a rational man. With much sincerity, they replied, "You may be right, but we cannot comprehend how Christ as God could assume the nature of man." We asked them whether God did not reveal Himself in the time of the exodus, and subsequently in the history of Israel, in a human form, to which they readily assented. A young woman who could read a little (the only lettered female we met during our long tour), took an active part in the conversation, but, like a wayward, fretful child, she would one minute, with tears in her sparkling eyes, smite upon her heaving and swelling bosom, and in accents of despair bemoan her sins and unbelief; and the next, with a

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smile of incredulity, would deprecate her doubts in the veracity of the *Falasha* creed and the religion in which she had been trained. We reproved her reckless indifference, and, as if conscious that her behaviour was not quite correct, she quickly replied, "I am anxious to know the truths contained in the Bible, and, if it were possible, I would accompany you to *Aboo Maharee*." Evening was now approaching, and we had to press on to reach the place, whither the servants had preceded us.

Our path along the tortuous course of the river *Dimah* was so densely wooded, that we were compelled to use every precaution, especially as our hair for some time had not undergone a clipping operation, to escape the fate of Absalom. The stars had begun to twinkle in the blue sky, the hyenas had attuned their piercing throats for the nocturnal revel, and still no village fire gleamed through the darkness, and no enlivening ditty from the village youths rang on the ear. We already thought that the wild jungle must be our home for the night, when, suddenly, shrill shouts of our people from the opposite bank told us that we were close to *Balankab*, a *Falasha* settlement. We at once forded the river, and exchanged the high-peaked and fatiguing saddle for the luxurious grass couch. This second day's journey impressed us deeply with the magnitude and sacredness of our work, and, wearied and way-worn as we were, I believe both myself and companion would gladly, had it been possible, have forgotten all physical toils, and continued day and night our march through a land where hundreds

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and thousands of struggling, anguished, and despairing souls were longing for that message which can silence the upbraidings of conscience, and shiver the chains of superstition.

The next day being the Lord's-day, we were very reluctant to leave our quarters, but the poor peasants assured us that they could not entertain us another day. We offered to pay them for all that we required, but as the worst Abyssinian would consider himself branded with a lasting stigma, did he sell bread and milk to a traveller, we had no alternative, but to move on a little further to the abode of *Aboo Maharee* and his monks. Before we set out, the *Falashas* of *Balankab* visited us.

Like all their co-religionists, they were exceedingly ignorant and superstitious. We gave them a brief account of the history of man as recorded in Genesis, and the unhappy consequences entailed by the Fall. They thought that we had not the correct version of the story, and in a very solemn tone assured us, that their Bible stated that forty days before the great Architect of the universe had formed our globe, He gave shape and form to Adam, and then left him at the threshold of the future paradise. Subsequently, when all had started into existence, the Creator saw a clod of clay, and, not knowing where to place it, He said to the angels, "What shall we do with this?" Upon which the heavenly host responded, "Give him a soul," and thus man became a living being. We rebuked this perversion of the Scripture narrative, and then, in the presence of a number of attentive

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Christians, related to them the history of the creation, of God's goodness to man, of man's temptation and fall into corruption, of his incessant struggle with sin and unbelief, and, finally, of the expiation and pardon of his guilt through the blood and righteousness of a Redeemer. They all thought that if they were to receive such lessons frequently, they should become good Christians.

It was past midday when we crossed the *Dimah*, and along a lonely heath skirted by hills and enlivened by herds of grazing deer, leisurely proceeded towards *Zera Workee*. Several of our acquaintances of the morning accompanied us to witness our interview with their chief; and, notwithstanding that we endeavoured to direct their minds to the subject of their own souls' eternal welfare, they could not be diverted from the one engrossing topic—the piety, abstinence, and learning of the great man we were soon to see.

Lively converse beguiled the monotony of the short journey, and brought us sooner than we had anticipated to *Zera Workee*. Being Christians, we were obliged to keep at a respectful distance from the home of *Abu Makarce* and his monks. This precaution we had no cause to regret; on the contrary, we admired here and everywhere else the superior taste of the Falashas, which forces the stranger to seek shelter in the clean shady grove, and not in the foul and reeking hut. Whilst our companions went to announce our visit, we retired to one of the bowers into which nature had fashioned her own choice gifts.

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Our intention to encounter in the arena of controversy, a high-priest so renowned for his lore and sanctity as *Aboo Maharee*,* had been the subject of much speculation among the people, and it was generally reported that we would not venture to subject our creed to the chance of a public defeat. The report of our arrival at *Balankab* dissipated this illusion, and multitudes, almost simultaneously with ourselves, arrived at *Zera Workee* to witness the interview. Many of the parties, in defiling before our sylvan retreat, prognosticated, in good *Amharic*, an unfavourable issue to our conference. The bustle and commotion, and the running to and fro, had continued for some time, when, suddenly, all stood still to behold the priestly procession emerging from the sacred enclosure. *Aboo Maharee*, the chief, swathed in a white *shama*, and holding a long bamboo staff, which in the distance looked like the crosier of a bishop, in dignified gravity moved in front of the heaving and undulating mass. There was something imposing and majestic in the appearance of the man, which one could scarcely behold without admiration and reverence. He is, I should think, about sixty years of age, of a noble and commanding figure, high and expressive forehead, melancholy restless eyes, and a countenance once no doubt mild and pleasing, but to which self-imposed penances and a repulsive practice have imparted an expression most strange and unearthly. Myself and companion

* The *Falashas* have three high-priests: one in the province of *Quara*, the other in *Armatgioho*, and the third, *Aboo Maharee*, in *Dembea*.

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rose simultaneously as he and his followers in a well-ordered procession approached, a compliment which all gratefully acknowledged; and then, as if by previous arrangement, the multitude squatted down on the right and on the left of our retreat, leaving a broad space, as the rubicon, between the polluted people and the holy priests. The whole assembly, in perfect bewilderment and wonder, stared at us with a stern, grave, and unmoved gaze, as if they wanted to penetrate our very thoughts, and read in our very looks their hope or despair, joy or sorrow. There sat the old monk, macerated and wan, with the brown skin hanging in loose folds around his wasted features, his eyes sunk and lustreless from long mortification, or bright and sparkling with the mad fire of fanaticism. Close to this spectre-like apparition, as if seeking hope and comfort from mature age and sinking life, reclined the young novice, in whose placid and unnaturally smooth face the struggles of painful superstition, and perhaps the horrid consciousness that life, with its attractions and ties, had all been vainly bartered for a disordered dream and a wild feverish fancy, were too glaringly traceable.

The other groups, among whom we noticed a good sprinkling of women, offered a strange contrast, by their healthy looks and smiling expressions, to these mutilated, dissatisfied, and unhappy priests. It is true, there was scarcely one in that assembly, who had any doubt that these ascetics were self-denying, good men, who had renounced the world and all its fascinations for a life of devotion and piety; yet there

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seemed, as if by a general sympathy, some secret apprehension, some latent fear, that, after all, these proud and secluded anchorites might be in error, and, instead of the substance, grasp a mere shadow—instead of revealed truth, cling only to a mere self-created fancy. In conformity with Abyssinian etiquette, that a stranger should honour a chief with a present, I gave to *Aboo Maharee* a gilt-edged Bible and a white dress, which, as he could not accept it from my polluted hand, he requested me to put into the bag of one of the priests. He was exceedingly pleased with this token of my regard, and after many elaborate thanks all rose, and in a fervid and solemn strain prayed for our safety, welfare, and happiness. It was a moving sight to see such a vast number of priests and people, all with uncovered heads and uplifted hands, supplicating the Divine blessing on the lonely and isolated missionaries.

Several minutes elapsed before the effect of this touching scene subsided, and then, when all had again resumed their seats, we explained to them the object of our mission, and the motive by which we were actuated. Our words removed the fears which the malicious *Amharas* had excited, and we were unanimously solicited to state the essential truths of our belief. The most intelligent candidly confessed that our words were the echo of Moses and David, and that they would be happy to see us frequently among them, in order to discuss these weighty and important topics. *Aboo Maharee*, who had hitherto remained silent, now turned to me, and, in a

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faltering and tremulous voice, said, "Either you will become one of us, or I shall become one of you." They very much wanted us to stay with them all night; but we had no inclination to intrude our hungry retinue on the hospitality of priests who must be their own cooks and bakers. *Aboo Maharee* would not, however, allow us to depart without some provision, and, reluctant as we were, he compelled us to accept a basket of *teff* and a *gumbo* of *dallah*. The worthy chief, to convince us of his interest in our mission, ordered *Debterah Negousee*, a learned scribe, to conduct us to all the Jewish settlements. This amicable conference at *Zera Workee* produced the most favourable impression on the *Falashas*, and wherever we came, the report had already preceded us that we were the friends of *Aboo Maharee*.

The cold, dull, and sullen morning had not yet been dissipated by the light of day, when several monks made their appearance. The object of their early visit was the universal desire to get copies of the Sacred Scriptures. We put them off till our arrival at *Genda*, whither they willingly promised to follow us. Our people being still in the huts, where they and our animals had been stowed, we had abundance of time to lecture these priests on the false character with which they invested themselves, as well as the unholy and sinful practice in which they indulged. They were quite appalled at the passage of Scripture which placed them in a category with the Ammonite and Moabite, and, to conceal their confusion, endeavoured to justify the continuance of sacri-

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fices. By about nine a.m. we were on our way to *Fenja*. Here we met with several of the monkish fraternity. One of these, a haughty-looking fellow, to display his Biblical knowledge, edified us by relating the exploits of the twelve tribes, whose names, unfortunately for his learning, he could not recollect. We told him that a little child in our country knew all these, and many other more important incidents, much better. Not at all checked by the rebuke, his voluble tongue sought scope for its bluster in the glorious topic of the Aaronic priestly succession, and I do not know how long he might have rattled on had we not pointed him to Hosea iii. 4, 5. He thought this quite a sufficient reply, and wrapping his *shama* close around his gaunt frame, he politely invited us to his settlement, and marched off.

A further ride of two hours brought us to *Genda*, the ecclesiastical domain of the *Aboonâ*. His Grace had already communicated the probability of our visit to his *shum*, and this official generously offered us a home and shelter during our stay. We accepted the proffered accommodation for our servants and animals, but as our skins had not yet become impervious to the sting and bite of all kinds of reptiles and insects, we preferred to brave the uncertain dangers of the open plain to the sure assault from the varied specimens of entomology to be found in a native *shed*.

The town of *Genda*, with its district, which affords a considerable revenue to the *Aboona* in office, also receives within its bounds his remains when defunct. The church dedicated to this sacred object stands on a

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wide open space, embowered by the sombre foliage o
venerable trees. Like all sacred edifices, it is coni
cally shaped, and surmounted by an apex on whicl
glitters, in the bright rays of the sun, the significan
brazen emblem of the Christian faith. The successiv



Metropolitans who lie buried here, I believe neve
expended a salt on its repair, and the walls woul
long since have crumbled into ruin, had not the con
tributions of the faithful priest, and the handicraft o

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the unbelieving *Falasha*, occasionally patched up the revered mausoleum. Half-a-dozen fanatic monks, who had come from a remote province to worship at the shrine of the holy fathers, when they saw me levelling my photographic camera, which they mistook for a hostile gun, fiercely seized their massive clubs, and, in a compact line, marched on the imaginary enemy. I disarmed their monkish wrath by reversing the instrument. They had still some suspicion about my design, but, on showing them the portrait of the *Aboona*, and the process of taking a view, their fears were forgotten in bewildering amazement, and they emphatically ejaculated, "*Be Aboona Salama ye moot!* (By the death of *Aboona Salama*,) you are a magician!"

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CHAPTER XVIII.

[illegible]—Fine Expanses of the Law—Boisterou[illegible]—[illegible]—Mode of Travelling—Meet[illegible]—A Mysterious Snake—Weavers abando[illegible]—An Alarming Brawl—Suspicious Quarters—Th[illegible]—A Settlement without a Bible—[illegible]—A Mixed Host—Numerous Visito[illegible]—Expenses of Bible Bills.

To employ our time profitably, we availed ourselves o[illegible] interval that elapsed before the news of ou[illegible] preceded the scattered *Fulashu* settlements t[illegible] some missionary excursions in the neighbour[illegible] Tuesday being one of the nearest villages, w[illegible] early the following morning. Sever[illegible] were wending the green te[illegible] left their agricultural imple[illegible] away to communicate th[illegible] evidently produced grea[illegible] immediately conjectured, that th[illegible] had at last here plied their mischievou[illegible] contrast and alarm. To ascertain th[illegible] into th[illegible] secures th[illegible] the polluting foot of the unbe[illegible] with a knot of *Fulashas*[illegible] man, woman, an[illegible] assembled to hear us, had[illegible] by a report, that we were

authorized to bind round their necks the *matteb* *— the hated badge of Abyssinian Christianity. We removed their fears and prejudices before we separated, and they all promised to visit us frequently whilst at *Genda*.

From this place we struck across a beautiful valley, where the daisy, buttercup, and geranium grew in perfection, to an extensive village called *Oibga*. Here the priests and people gave us a cordial and hearty welcome. The four expounders of the law, anxious to retain the confidence of their flock, expatiated in a declamatory style on the long list of ritual observances enjoined in the book of Leviticus. We fully admitted that all that they had mentioned was of Divine origin, but, at the same time, we also reminded them that God required something more than ablutions and the performance of certain rites and ceremonies, which only affected the body, but left unchanged and unconverted the sinful heart. In this obvious truth they tacitly acquiesced. The scope of the law was next discussed, and it was an affecting sight to witness the breathless attention, which pervaded that assembly, as they heard for the first time of the love of the Gospel in the types and figures of their own law.

One of the priests, the best informed of the four, whose heart the truth of God's Word had evidently penetrated, in a voice choked by the deepest emotion, exclaimed, "I am now too full to speak, but come to

* The *matteb* is a blue silken cord, which every Abyssinian Christian man and woman wears suspended round the neck, as the distinctive mark of his creed.

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my village, for I want to converse with you alone, and also afford my people the opportunity of hearing the good tidings you proclaim." We promised to accept his invitation, which so pleased him, that he ordered that portion of the Scripture which they possessed to be brought out; and, whilst the women were shouting their shrill la, la, la, and the priests were bravely intoning some verses on purification, we took our departure.

The news of our arrival at *Genda*, which spread with almost incredible rapidity through the various districts far and near, attracted a vast concourse of *Falashas* to the spot where we had encamped. Our tent being too small to receive the numerous priests and their followers, we made a tree in front of our canvas dwelling—the usual court of the *Genda* administrators of justice—the scene of our meetings and interviews. These open-air assemblies, however, soon threatened to become very boisterous and intemperate, on account of the great concourse of Christian *debterahs* and priests, who thought this a splendid opportunity for the display of their polemical prowess against the *Falasha* infidels. To put a stop to the clamour and contest, we stationed some of our own and the *Aboona's* people around the green sward, and these, together with several Christian *debterahs* whom we had enlisted in our service, kept perfect order and quiet amongst the wild and turbulent crowd. The *Falashas*, with their dark lustrous eyes rivetted upon us, sat motionless as statues whilst we dilated on various passages of Scripture in proof of the veracity

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of our faith, and its adaptation to meet the wants of the craving heart, and the upbraidings of the guilty conscience. We next discussed the mysteries of the Trinity, and, without burdening their minds with metaphysical sophistries and subtle reasonings, we simply explained to them the various prophecies which heralded the advent of the Redeemer, adverted to the numerous miracles which attested His mission, and lastly gave an account of His sufferings and death, that sin might be cancelled and the sinner saved. *Debterah Beru*, the most intelligent man we met among the *Falashas*, was now urged to reply to our statements, but, as every objection which he advanced betrayed the impression produced on his own mind, he got up and walked away. A few days afterwards he and two other *debterahs*, (one a teacher who has a school of 94 children,) came to us, and solemnly declared their convictions of the truth, and their earnest desire to be baptized.

The number of our visitors, despite the fierce heat, continued to increase from hour to hour without interruption. Down the narrow defile, and across the sloping turf, groups of *Falashas* were seen the whole morning, threading their way towards the place of our encampment. There crept along the pale, haggard, and shrunken form of the monk, who had passed the best period of life in a wild jungle, with the beasts for his companions, and noxious and bitter roots for his food; close to him, with a little bag suspended over his shoulders containing a change of dress belonging to his superior, strutte l the youth,

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whose elastic step had not yet been weakened by voluntary penance, and whose bright and smiling face wasting superstition had not yet dimmed; in the rear, enveloped in his red-bordered white *shama*, like a Roman in his toga, marched the peasant, his head plastered with butter, which, in the distance, and under the bright rays of an African sun, gave this important part of the human frame the aspect of a black polished capital, placed on a white marble column. The motley multitude spread themselves in numerous groups over the ground, and there, joined by a *debterah*, or priest, who had already obtained a copy of the Word of God, the passages we had quoted, and the comments we had made were rehearsed, till almost every one, whether he could read or not, got some idea of our belief, and carried home with him some proof of the veracity as well as the importance of the Christian faith.

The noise and incessant controversial strife between the Jews and Christians, induced us to forestal the visits of the people by a short missionary tour to a district on the borders of the *Tzana* lake. In a country like Abyssinia, where the traveller depends on the charity of the people for his subsistence, on a tree or the luxury of a tent for a dwelling, and green rushes or soft grass for a bed, the preparations for a journey require so little time, that we had no sooner decided on our tour, than the mules were saddled, and our servants, wrapped in the folds of their cumbrous *shamas*, stood ready to start. It was still very early when we set out, and we congratulated

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ourselves on being fortunate enough to escape the hypocritical and begging prayers of a crowd of lazy priests and monks. Near the Jews' village several shepherds who were driving their flocks into the fields noticed us, and instantly more than a dozen of our acquaintances, panting and breathless, came to inquire whether we were leaving them. Their dejected countenances quickly brightened up, when they heard we were only going away for a few days, and we rode on amidst their sincere wishes for our speedy and safe return. One of them voluntarily accompanied us, in order to learn, as he said, more of the Redeemer of Israel whom we proclaimed.

The cool and lovely morning, which was followed by a burning and fiery noon, made us long for *Ambasina*, the place where resided the priest from whom we had received an invitation at *Oibga*. On the road we met his assistant, a young, shrewd, and lively *Falasha*, who at once joined our party, and with perfect ease and freedom narrated all that the Jews had told him about us and our belief. I asked him whether he would not like to learn those sublime truths which are able to give peace to the conscience, and hope and confidence to the heart. He thought that a strict observance of the Mosaic ritual and institutions was, if united with penance and the infliction of voluntary sufferings, quite sufficient to atone for sins, and to gain the favour of God. We instanced himself as a proof that the *Falasha* priesthood transgressed the very law in which they confided, and manifested the depravity and corruption of their

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hearts by the torture and agony they themselves inflicted. The heat, which continued to increase in intensity, compelled us to seek shelter behind a copse of wide-spreading acacias, and there our young friend squatted down close to us, and unconscious or forgetful of the contamination he contracted, he took the Bible, and unfolding page after page, read many of those beautiful passages which, like the scenery around us, breathed only love, benevolence and compassion to the care-worn and anxious soul. Charmed by the beautiful sentiments of the seers of Israel, our new acquaintance eagerly read every verse and chapter we pointed out to him; and when that faith which, unlike the law, speaks not of death and judgment, but of life and immortality, began to affect his mind and heart, he leaped up, and full of animation exclaimed, "Come, come, I will guide you to my superior." We immediately mounted, and under a noontide heat which made the blood boil and the head giddy, hastened over an uneven and undulating tract of country, towards some cool wide-spreading wanza-trees, whose massive foliage canopied the conical huts of *Ambasina*. In our search through the tangled weeds and loose stones for a green shady spot, we stumbled on a monstrous snake, which lay motionless like a lopped bough amid the treacherous grass and creepers, which we imprudently pressed beneath our feet. The reptile, enraged by our intrusion on its quiet retreat, raised its crested head, and with a loud hiss appeared ready to dart on the foremost of the party; but the fury which lifted it

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above the interlaced creepers and herbage, exposed it to our weapons, and in an instant a well-aimed spear struck on its head so fell and dexterous a blow, that a second would have terminated its existence, had not the luxuriant vegetation afforded it a refuge.

Our unexpected arrival created the most lively excitement, and young and old abandoned the loom, and hastened with their two sacerdotal chiefs to see the white *Falashas*. The solemn truths on which we had expatiated at *Oibga* were again rehearsed, and to their surprise and wonder they all saw that the law, in which they had hitherto confided and believed, had time and not eternity, temporal and not spiritual promises, for its reward. Perfectly absorbed in the magnitude of this theme, we lingered amidst this interesting assembly for a considerable time, and when at last the declining shadows reminded us that we must move, the tear and melancholy gaze of the majority convinced us that the tidings of mercy, though heard for the first time, had touched their hearts and filled their minds with wonder and awe.

An hour's further ride brought us to *Gouerna*, a large village inhabited by Jews and Christians. The thatched huts of the *Falashas* were situated at some distance from those of their *Amhara* neighbours, a precaution strictly enjoined by mutual antipathy and religious prejudice. We rode on towards the outskirts of the settlement, and there on a sloping ground, overshadowed by a sycamore, we saw about ten persons poring over a soiled parchment manuscript of the Gospel of St. John. The sight of this

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sacred portion of God's Word at once convinced us that our mission had already excited some inquiry among the people. Our conversation, which naturally turned upon the Scripture they had been studying, was soon interrupted by loud screams interpolated with emphatic oaths, which in hideous confusion struck upon our ears. The disagreeable brawlers swept right on towards us, shouting in a variety of keys, and not very choice expressions, that our servants had maltreated some notorious scamp, for an old offence, of which he was as innocent as a newborn babe. We promptly instituted a court, and then and there, in strict conformity with Abyssinian law, endeavoured to have the cause of the riot thoroughly sifted. The spirit of litigation, for which the natives have an innate love, threatened, however, to occupy more time than we could possibly spare, and as my patience was already exhausted, I cut the gordian knot of the inexplicable fray, by insisting that my people, who were the aggressors, should apologize to their incensed opponents. This met with the judge's full approbation; and in an instant the offenders, who expected a severer punishment, poised heavy stones on their necks, and in an attitude of cringing humility, besought pardon of the plaintiffs for their hasty assault. The vindictive spirit so rife amongst this hot-tempered and excitable race, was not quite appeased, even after this reconciliation had been effected; and, in order to disappoint the idle savages who delight in fights and squabbles, we moved on, escorted by about a dozen *Falashas*, who lamented the unfor-

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tunate incident, and promised to visit us on our return to *Genda*.

An hour before sundown, we came to a small Christian hamlet near *Gorgora Eila*. The wretched appearance of the hovels, and the insolent air of the gaunt and scantily-clad inhabitants made us question the wisdom of selecting that spot for our night's lodging. Fatigue and exhaustion, however, overcame our suspicious fears, and, had not the famished hyenas too freely indulged in their boisterous laughter, we should have felt quite at home among our savage-looking acquaintances.

Early in the morning we rode to *Gorgora Eila*, a village occupied by *Falasha* potters. Men and women, even at that early hour, were busy moulding pots and pans and other useful domestic utensils. Lathe and moulds they do not require to give shape to their manufacture, necessity having taught them to dispense with every implement in carrying on their craft. Their dexterous fingers give form to the clay, and the sun and a good fire dry and temper it afterwards. The articles they make are very strong, and this, as the poor people naïvely told me, is a serious obstacle to their industry. At *Gorgora Eila*, although a respectable settlement, we did not find one who could read fluently. Against the truths we preached they offered no objection and advanced no argument. "We know that we are sinners, and stand in need of forgiveness," was their unanimous reply; "but neither we nor our priests ever, before your arrival, heard of a Redeemer who died to satisfy Divine justice, and to

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procure for man the Divine mercy." We asked them whether they would like to be instructed in the nature of God's love to man as shown in the incarnation, life, and death of our Saviour.

This abrupt query diffused smiles of happiness over their embrowned countenances, and each one heartily joined in the response, "Yes, we want to learn, if you will only come and teach us." Before we separated, several of the women brought us bread, milk, and peppered paste, and as we did not feel inclined to eat, they persuaded us to take on our journey these tokens of their hospitality and gratitude.

We now struck across a beautiful heath dotted with browsing flocks, and vocal with the wild music of the shepherd's pipe. Numerous huts, constructed of a framework of thick canes, interwoven with mimosa bushes and acacia boughs, were discernible at short intervals throughout the Arcadian scene, in which, like fanes of sylvan deities, they stood secluded. As we advanced the road became more rugged, wild, and picturesque. Lofty cliffs and promontories, intersected by deep wooded valleys, now obscured, and then again suddenly revealed the prospect over the broad and unrippled *Tzana*. Here, upon a giddy summit, far above the towering heights, rose, amid a forest of stately junipers, the Christians' place of worship; yonder in those glens, agitated by a gentle breeze, waved an abundant harvest of wheat, *teff*, and barley, bordered by golden strips of the yellow oil-plant, whilst the very road we traversed was one entangled shrubbery of jessamine, honey-

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suckle, thyme, and other aromatic plants, which at the touch of our feet breathed a fragrance that imparted an exquisite perfume to the atmosphere. We halted some hours at *Gorgora Dereskee*, where a considerable audience immediately collected around us. As in other settlements so in this also, they had never possessed a complete copy of the inspired volume, and, in default of Scriptural knowledge, were naturally inclined to believe that fasts, penances, sacrifices, tithes, and daily ablutions satisfied the demands of God's law, and atoned for man's transgression.

About purity of thought and holiness of mind they had no idea, and when we asked them whether they believed that mere external acts such as they had named, without that corresponding faith and love to God by which our actions ought to be regulated, were sufficient in the sight of Him who said, "Be ye holy, for I am holy," they merely shook their heads, and replied, "We have our priests, and what they order we implicitly perform." How pitiable is the state of this poor deluded people, who, with all their consciousness of sin and deep sense of guilt, have only for their refuge the condemning law, and for their solace the pangs of self-inflicted tortures!

At *Atshergee*, where we next halted, we found a busy community of *Falasha* weavers. Their looms, which were of the clumsiest description imaginable, stood under sheds at the entrance of the village, and formed both the means of their subsistence, and a slight barricade against the inroads of wild beasts. The rattling of the shuttle between the bamboo-sticks

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which kept the woof properly suspended over a pit several feet in depth, where the weaver sat comfortably ensconced, ceased on our approach. We took our seats under the central shed, and entered into friendly and familiar converse with the simple-minded workmen collected around us. The village, they told us, contained a population of above a hundred souls, but amongst that number there was not one who could spell a single word either in *Amharic* or *Ethiopic*. The usual ritual observances, and a few prayers said by rote, constituted their whole religious worship. "And have you never heard of a Redeemer," we inquired, "who left His throne of glory, assumed our nature, suffered, bled, and died, that the law which denounced death against all who sinned might be superseded by the Gospel, which promises life and immortality to all who repent and believe?" Their answer was, "We have received intelligence of these wonderful things from brethren who have conversed with you; but, before your arrival, we never heard the name of a Redeemer, nor knew that it occurred in our books." Having read to them several passages of Scripture, we remounted our mules, and, through deep gorges white with foaming cascades, and over verdant meadows whose flower-bespangled surface concealed dangerous pitfalls and treacherous marshes, toiled down to *Debra Sina*, a peninsula, where we expected a cargo of books from the island of Matracha.

The prospect from this place across the calm, smooth lake, studded with numerous islets, and

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bounded by perpendicular volcanic rocks and winding valleys, afforded a sight which we could not sufficiently admire. The peninsula itself, wooded by a grove of dark trees and the interlaced foliage of various flowering shrubs, through which a church and several houses were distinctly visible, formed the most perfect scene of quiet and repose imagination could well picture. We lingered about an hour in this lovely spot, and then, as our books had not yet arrived, retraced our steps, and alighted at the farm of a royal officer, who gave us a sullen and most unfriendly reception. The long day's journey had sharpened our appetites, and our famished servants, dreading to pass a supperless night, began to urge us to leave this unblest ground. This expression produced a favourable effect; for our morose host, unwilling as he felt to supply our wants, was still more unwilling to become notorious for his rudeness towards strangers, and therefore, in regard for his own reputation, ordered an abundant supply of milk, bread, and pepper to be provided for us.

Our night's rest was unfortunately interrupted, by swarms of monstrous, buzzing and stinging mosquitoes, with which the rank grass where our tent stood appeared quite alive, so that, worn out and exhausted as we felt, we were glad to quit a spot so uninviting to the wearied wayfarer. About an hour's ride brought us to *Tschangar*, famous for its convent and sanctuary, and infamous for the arrogance and pride of its large population. We had intended to make a short stay in this place, but in our ride through the

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collection of sugarloaf-shaped huts, we encountered so many grim and malignant countenances, that we preferred hunger, to the doubtful hospitality of these repulsive savages. At noon we reached *Genda*, and never, I believe, was a refuge more welcome to the homeless than were the familiar tree and our tented dwelling to the foot-sore, way-worn, and feverish missionaries.

The Sunday, which we had anticipated with delight, promised from the very beginning to become a noisy, busy, and exciting day. At first, only a few priests made their appearance, and in imploring accents supplicated for Bibles. We told them to come the following morning, but, instead of complying with our request, they squatted down in sad and gloomy despondency in front of our tent. Gradually, as the rising sun mounted above the horizon, and bathed in its ruddy glare each shrub and bough, the number of our visitors increased, and before many hours had elapsed we found ourselves surrounded by a whole multitude of monks and priests, in whose troubled and haggard countenances, one could read the devouring anxiety and corroding fear, which lacerated their hearts and agonized their souls. Several *debterahs*, whom the daily routine of field-labour, or the exertions of the hammer and the loom, do not allow much leisure to indulge in those gloomy thoughts which haunt the mind of the lonely hermit in his pestilential jungle and desolate wilderness, asked us a number of important and weighty questions, amongst others this, "Why, if faith be necessary to salvation, has not

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God, who gave a Saviour, also imparted knowledge to understand, and faith to believe in that Saviour?" We reminded them that Moses himself had removed the difficulties which perplexed their minds by the plain declaration that the temple, the priesthood, the altar, and the bleeding victim, were only types and emblems, which derived their significance from Him who was to be a guide to the earthly Canaan, as well as a Saviour of sinners, to procure admission into the heavenly Canaan. To corroborate this we quoted Exodus xxiii. 20, 21, and, as if anticipating the words which hung on our lips, they at once said to each other, "Since all this is plainly revealed, we must blame our own hearts for want of faith, and our own minds for incapacity to understand." This discussion, which lasted several hours, made a deep impression on all, but particularly on the *debterahs*, who, without exception, avowed that our faith was furnished with sufficient proofs to convince the mind, and ample promises to win the affections of the heart.

The books which had been lying at the isle of *Matracha*, at length safely arrived. This cheering intelligence created quite a sensation among the *Falashas*, and from all directions large groups of turbaned priests and bareheaded *debterahs* eagerly hastened to *Genda* to secure copies of the Inspired Volume. We spoke to the different groups who in succession surrounded us on the curses and blessings, the rewards and the punishments, which the Bible announced; and then, to impress on them the responsibility which the possession of that precious

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book entailed, we reminded them that formerly they could say they did not know of a Redeemer, who died that justice might have a compensation to accept, and mercy might have forgiveness to bestow; but that now, since they possessed the oracles of God, which answered all their inquiries and satisfied all their doubts, such excuses and pleas would only aggravate their guilt, and enhance the penalty of their unbelief. They promised to attend to our instructions, and then retired to their friends, who were scattered over the heath, either engaged in polemical discussions with the native Christians, or listening to one of their own people, who was reading some of the Messianic passages which we had marked in their Bibles. The bustle, talk, and excitement continued till night, and then again all around us was hushed into a perfect quiet, save that every few minutes the savage howl of a wild animal in search of prey broke upon the deep silence, and reminded us that we were in Africa—in a wild and barbarous land.

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CHAPTER XIX.

An Unlettered Group — The Monkey-bread Tree — Sincere Inquirers — Great Surprise — Ethiopian Serenaders — The Fanatic Monk—Evening Chat—Ardent Debate—An Undaunted Petitioner—A Desolate Region—Beauty of the Lowland—An Aristocratic Friend—The Eloquent Prophet —Conjugal Differences—The Deserted Wife—Midnight Adventures—Dread of the New Testament—The Breathless Pursuit—Refusal of a Request.

We had been at *Genda* from the 8th to the 18th of October, and although during that period we were constantly engaged in proclaiming the tidings of mercy to hundreds and hundreds of *Falashas*, who came from every part of Abyssinia—from the bleak summits of *Semien*, and the malarious jungles of *Quara*—we still thought it advisable, although the numbers of our visitors had not diminished, to carry the message of salvation to the homes and villages of the people, where both old and young, men and women, might be benefited by our message. This consideration induced us to set our small caravan again in motion. Our direction was south-west, over an extensive pasture land, on which browsed immense herds of cattle belong to the *Zelan*, a nomadic tribe, who profess a kind of hybrid creed, which unites to a few Christian rites all the senseless vagaries of their former Paganism. At *Lai Belash*, a small *Falasha*

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village, we made a short halt in order to speak to the people, who on our approach came out to meet us. There were about a dozen adults and a few children collected together, but in this little group there was not one who possessed the least biblical knowledge, or could answer the most simple question on religious subjects. "We perform daily ablutions, fast twice a week, pay tithe to our priests, do penance, receive absolution; and these acts," they repeatedly said, "secure us heaven and the bliss of Paradise!" That the voice which spoke on Sinai's Mount announced only promises limited to time, they had never heard, and their cheeks grew pale, and their looks bewildered, when we told them that the Law of Moses was designed to secure a temporal kingdom, and the Gospel of Christ to secure a heavenly inheritance. With many a keen pang of grief for this poor people, who are fettered in the trammels of a despotism far more crushing and blasting than their fathers ever experienced, we proceeded on our journey till the declining sun warned us to deviate from our path, and to seek a refuge for the night in one of the thickets whither a lawless soldiery compels the peasant to fly for refuge. Some of the Jews who accompanied us as guides led us across pathless hills and glens to a large Christian village, where, in the deep grass, we found a clean and soft bed. Mint, balsam, and other aromatic shrubs, interspersed with prickly weeds and brambles, grew in luxuriant profusion beneath the leafy canopy of the monkey-bread tree. About a dozen peasants, who had followed me in a ramble

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over their meadows and fields, were much amused to observe me gazing through the incomprehensible photographic camera at a magnificent specimen of their



native forests. The tree measured upwards of forty feet in circumference, and the lower branches, which extended in a horizontal direction, were more than double this size in length. From the distance it had the appearance of a luxurious grove, in whose shade a whole regiment might find a comfortable retreat from the noontide heat. To rush from the fiery blaze of an ardent sun into the refreshing gloom of these umbrageous trees, would be the excess of pleasurable indulgence after a toilsome march; but the certainty

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of fever or ague deters the wayfarer from stretching his aching limbs on the canopied verdure, in which the seeds of disease perpetually lurk.

The sun had not yet dissipated the dewy vapours of a chilly night, when a whole group of *Falashas*, engaged in earnest converse, approached our tent. The *shama* was instantly thrown over our shoulders, and, wrapt in the folds of this convenient garb, we were, without the waste of a minute, in full Abyssinian dress. Our kind friends of the previous day had no sooner squatted down on the wet grass than they seized the *Amharic* Bible, and, turning over its leaves, pointed out to their acquaintances several Messianic passages, which no doubt had been the theme of their evening discussion. I assisted their researches, and then left them to Mr. Flad, who for more than an hour conversed with them, on the tender love and compassion of our God, as revealed in the sufferings and death of the Redeemer.

They expressed themselves delighted with what we had told them, and promised to ponder seriously over what they had heard. We gave them a Bible, and, amid an exuberance of valedictions, started for *Chamare*, the central town of *Dagossa*, a district containing a considerable Jewish population. It was past noon, after a most fatiguing and trying journey through many a deep gorge and narrow defile, where the lurid heat of an unclouded sky made the head and eyes ache with a feverish fire, that, utterly worn out and prostrate, we reached our destination. Having no royal *baldaraba*, or conductor from the King, the

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Governor, a very kind man, a rarity in Abyssinia, expressed his regret that he could not provide for our wants, though he willingly promised to secure huts for our people and mules. The Jews, very soon after our arrival, came to see us, and, to our agreeable surprise, brought us, quite unsolicited, fowls, milk, and bread, just the provisions we needed. We informed them that we intended to remain a few days in their settlement, and also that we should deem it a favour if they would acquaint their coreligionists of our presence at *Chamafe*. They readily complied with our request, and, before night, messengers were despatched to all the *Falasha* hamlets and villages, to announce the arrival of the white missionaries.

Early on the following morning, before the sun had mounted above the horizon we were seated on some stones in the shadow of a rock, explaining to a large audience the great topic which had brought us to Abyssinia. They manifested deep anxiety to become acquainted with the contents of God's Word, and the method of salvation through a suffering Redeemer. It is quite impossible to describe their amazed looks and startled expressions of countenance, when we dilated on the subject of sacrifices, and clearly demonstrated that sacrificial rites and mysterious emblems were to cease with the advent of Him, who gave significance to every type, and substance to every shadow. "According to your statement," they said, "we ought not to offer any sacrifices, nor pay implicit obedience to the laws which Moses enjoined upon Israel; but, if that is correct, our priests, and

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not we, must suffer the penalty of the error." We read to them a part of the eighteenth chapter of Ezekiel, and then, as several Christian priests and the governor of the place were present, we told them that their teachers, like those of the Christians, were, unfortunately, more guided by custom and traditional usages than by the revealed Word of God, and that hence arose their numerous legends and fables, superstitions and soul-destroying errors.

On our return from the *Falasha* village, a succession of Christian priests and monks occupied us the rest of the day. They were a superior class to the generality of the ecclesiastics, and I was glad to hear them express a hope, that our efforts for the welfare of the *Falashas*, might also be blessed to their own people.

A band of students, accompanied by their professors, favoured us with a serenade. Hoping to get rid of the tormenting songsters, we sent them the expected largesse; but the spirit of music, once evoked, could not be so easily silenced, and, uncharitable as it may seem, I must confess, that my aching ears made me fervently sigh for a universal hoarseness among those bawling throats.

The art of music, though practised by all, is only scientifically studied by *debterahs*, ecclesiastics, and a contemptible set of strolling minstrels, called *asmarees*. The young student for the priestly office, next to a small stock of Ethiopic lore, pays particular attention to this accomplishment, which is a sure step to future preferment. In the absence of every guide, or musical

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scale, the celebrity of the singer depends entirely on the soundness of his lungs and the dictates of his own good taste. A piercing nasal twang, is the orthodox style; and the stranger who has once attended a rehearsal in a church or convent, where young *debterahs* and candidates for Holy Orders practise, is not likely to expose himself a second time to the distracting noises of an Ethiopian choir.

The notice of our arrival, which had been communicated to the different *Falasha* settlements in the district, brought all the priests and their friends to *Chamare*. The majority of these turbaned ecclesiastics had never seen a complete volume of the Sacred Scriptures, and their demand for copies far exceeded the stock at our disposal. Before we supplied any applicant, we invariably made him read a few verses, in order to test his acquaintance with the *Amharic* character. The passages we selected were either direct Messianic prophecies, or solemn appeals to the heart, and these important topics kept up without interruption the serious tone of our discussions.

A monk, whose cadaverous and scowling stare, marked him as one of those fanatics, who seek in deserts and unsightly wastes that peace which they cannot find in the more active haunts of life, now approached our open tent. We invited him to come nearer; but, instead of yielding to our request, he bestowed on us a glance in which malice, scorn, hatred, bigotry, and every other evil passion were strikingly depicted. Our indifference to his withering scowl disarmed him of his ire, and, with knitted

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brows and compressed lips, he joined the circle of his attentive coreligionists. This move instantly prompted some questions about ceremonial cleanness; and, to the surprise of all, the monk had nothing to say, in defence of his scruples about associating with those who did not belong to the *Falashas*, or *his own particular caste*. We now catechized him on the practices of his order. Many candidly avowed that *Gorgorius*, the reformer of the *Falasha* hierarchy, ought not to have enjoined what God had forbidden, whilst others declared that it was better to afflict the body than to violate the law. When the quarrel began to grow vehement and exciting, we turned the conversation into a new direction, and from the covenant of works proceeded to the consideration of the covenant of grace. They admitted that Jeremiah xxxi. 31, evidently referred to the New Testament; the surly monk alone, in an agitated and deprecating tone of voice, declared that he would not believe Jeremiah, as he was a Christian and not a Jew. Such and similar foolish assertions about various prophecies roused once more the indignation of some *debterahs*, and, in a strain of biting sarcasm, in which the Abyssinians excel, they assailed the poor ascetic till he fairly gave up the contest, and with a dogged gravity avoided all share in the rest of our discussion. Towards noon the heat became intensely oppressive. To relieve our lungs from a suffocating sensation, we had one side of the tent removed; still the air was so scorching, and the foul effluvia from the greasy and steaming multitude so offensive, that we were reluctantly com-

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pelled to solicit a short respite from the incessant toil of preaching and polemical debate. They immediately retired to a spot distant some yards from our tent, and there, with the Bible in their hands, they formed themselves into different circles, intent on the subject of their discussion, and utterly indifferent to the fiery rays, which brought the butter down their heads in blistering and blinding streams.

At our second meeting we endeavoured to impress on them the guilt of man and the love of God, the holiness of the law and the penalty attached to its transgression; and these and other important truths moved the heart of the multitude, and made them breathe out, "Woe unto us, for our eyes are closed, our minds darkened, and we know not God!"

In the evening I repaired to a gentle eminence above the plain, from whence I had a magnificent prospect over the starlit waters of the *Tzana*. The hot winds which prevailed during the day had entirely subsided, and all nature revived, as from a trance, under the influence of the cool and refreshing atmosphere. About half-a-dozen *Falasha* men, and an equal number of women, gathered around me, to enjoy the beauty of the calm scene, as well as to while away the long evening in friendly chat. They frankly avowed that they were quite conscious, that a creed which only enjoined lavations, sacrifices, and ritual observances, could not remove sin, nor relieve the guilt-oppressed heart; and then, as if anxious to stifle the doubts and fears which had prompted their scepticism, they immediately added, "But, after all,

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our religion must be true, since it is contained in the book which Moses received direct from God." I assured them that I fully believed every word contained in the law delivered to Moses on Sinai and in the Wilderness, and that the only important point on which we differed, consisted in this, that *they* sought salvation in a few hollow and empty ceremonies, whilst we trusted for pardon and forgiveness to the Messiah, whom these rites and institutions typified. There was a solemnity and earnestness in the conversation, which the quiet of the hour, the starry loveliness of the sky, and all the beauties and wonders of creation by which we were encompassed, greatly tended to make lasting and impressive. This was particularly the case with the women, who listened in silence to all that we said, and only now and then by suppressed sighs, or devout upturned glances of their dark eyes, betrayed the swelling emotions which they experienced.

On the day of our departure, the excitement and noise reached a pitch of perfect frenzy. Jews and Christians, priests and people, in a confused and deafening din, wrangled and disputed in the most passionate temper, on the most sublime and sacred topics. We endeavoured to quiet and calm the fiery disputants; but we might as well have essayed to sway the wind-lashed waves of the *Tzana*. The clamour and tumult of the contending parties, which rendered our prolonged stay utterly useless, induced us to mount our mules and to hasten from the turbulent scene. About twenty *Falashas* and several monks,

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amongst whom was the fanatical ascetic, accompanied us over an undulating acacia-covered tract, to *Shargee*, two hours' distance from *Chamare*, where we spent the next night. As in all other places, so also here, we were, from the moment of our arrival to the decline of day, uninterruptedly engaged in solving the doubts of superstition, in removing the errors of unbelief, and in pointing out the true way of life to the anxious and inquiring. Without exception, the people and the priests,—those who had heard us before and those who now listened to us for the first time,—all acknowledged that Christ was revealed in the Bible, and that they could not sufficiently thank us for our toil and pains in making known to them those sublime truths, which had hitherto been hidden from their minds.

The desire to possess the written was quite equal to the desire to hear the preached Word. From the lowland of *Quara*, and the mountains of *Semien*, the scattered communities sent their deputations to secure for their respective settlements a copy of the sacred volume. One man who had come to *Genda* from a distance of several days' journey, on his arrival found that we were gone. Nothing daunted, he grasped his pilgrim's staff and followed our track to *Chamare*. On meeting us, a visible sensation of joy broke abruptly over the dark features of the care-worn wanderer, and, in strains of eloquent sincerity, he preferred his request. Another man—a priest, when he entered our tent, *naïvely* said, "I visited *Chamare* on business, and was just about to depart

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when I heard of your approach. Well, thought I, these men love the *Falashas*, and are interested in their welfare, the God of Israel may therefore dispose them to give me a Bible for my people. Encouraged by this hope, I went up to your tent, but the crowd was so dense that I failed in gaining admission. The next day I heard you preach, and again, on the day following, I listened to a lengthy discussion. Many afterwards got Bibles, but, though I entreated most earnestly, God evidently did not dispose your heart to grant my request. Now this morning my hopes are again disappointed; but, as I am accustomed to walk, I shall follow you till God inclines your heart to yield to my prayers." Such and similar pathetic appeals we heard almost daily; and, although we were unable to satisfy the importunate demands of all, yet we rejoiced to witness this spirit of anxious inquiry,—this yearning for the life-giving Word. Those who were happy enough to obtain the sacred volume, manifested their boundless gratitude by bringing us presents of fowls, milk, bread, &c., and those who came from a distance, and had nothing with which to make a return for the invaluable gift, prostrated themselves on the ground, and, notwithstanding our entreaties, would kiss our hands and feet—aye, the very ground where we sat, in token of their heartfelt acknowledgment. Our great difficulty was, to transport the heavy *Amharic* Bibles across a country where sometimes for hours the path wound along a yawning abyss, or over a steep rocky height. The poor people, however, thought we could sur-

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mount every physical impossibility, and consequently, whenever we put off an applicant till our return to *Genda*, he would regard it as a denial to his request, and squat down near our camp, the very picture of despair.

Daylight saw us again pursuing our weary and fatiguing journey in a south-west direction towards *Alava*. The country we had to traverse, our Abyssinians called a *birhan*, or untenanted wild; and certainly the name was quite appropriate, for the spacious pasture ground and the wooded hills, were alike unoccupied by the peasant's hut, and unenlivened by grazing flocks. The curse of civil war, which has raged unchecked, like a ravaging pestilence, in this unhappy land for more than a century, has depopulated whole provinces, and laid regions desolate, which, even in their present blighted and forlorn aspect, still smile with the loveliness of a deserted Eden, and the variegated attractions of a Paradise in ruins. Towards midday we descended into a deep, well-watered glen, where the vertical rays of a relentless sun fell on us with such intense and concentrated violence, that, regardless of obnoxious exhalations, and the distance of the stage, we threw ourselves on the tender herbage, and luxuriated in the refreshing shadow of the venerable trees.

The vegetation of the lowland district, is of a size and beauty surpassing all description. Plants and trees of the most lovely variety, from the sweet-scented jessamine to the gigantic sycamore, grow here in the utmost profusion. The fertile soil, watered

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an overhanging cliff, and the torn and craggy *Amba* rising perpendicularly from the wooded glen, are visibly marked by the traces of a terrific subterraneous convulsion. We lingered in the sombre foliage, despite its aguish exhalations, till the decline of noon, when we set our caravan again in motion, and vigorously scaled a steep pass that led to *Adeida Miriam*, the central point of *Alava*.

The *Shum*, happening to be one of that numerous class of Abyssinians who regard the white man with a jaundiced and malignant eye, gave us a reception that did not tend to allay our fears for our personal safety in a district where, till very lately, the power of the law was defied, and violence and crime were impudently housed. Providentially an old man in the village, a scion of an eclipsed aristocratic race, came to our assistance, and, through his good offices, our people and animals were provided with lodgings, and we ourselves placed under the ægis of his revered name. The low diet on which we had been forcibly kept for the last two days, made us a little nervous about our evening's fare. The kind old man, as well as the *Falashas*, anticipated our wants, and an ample supply of bread, milk, and pepper, were sent us for our evening repast.

The dawning day had scarcely burst through the heavy masses of dark clouds, which hung like a pall over the sky, when from every quarter we perceived numerous parties of *Falashas* wending their way towards our encampment. *Adeida Miriam* being close on the borders of *Quara*, a province

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where volcanic mountains and impenetrable jungles, afford an appropriate retreat to the superstitious priest and penitential monk, we were visited by several of these recluses, in whose haggard features and quivering frames could be read the traces of harrowing trouble and feverish despair. They were all legalists, glorying in the law and devoted to its enactments, without in the least understanding its scope, or perceiving the gracious design it was intended to accomplish. One priest in particular, whom many of his followers styled a prophet, after indulging in a hyperbolical exordium on the faith of the *Falashas*, poured forth an eloquent panegyric, on the laudable efforts of the white men for the spiritual welfare of the people. We at first thought that, like a clever declaimer, he intended, by a graceful rhetorical artifice, to magnify the disinterestedness of our labours, in order to give emphasis to a final deprecatory sentence; but, to our agreeable surprise, he continued his highly-coloured and impassionate harangue till at last sheer exhaustion compelled him to stop, and then he reiterated several times, "True! true! you instruct our ignorance; you seek to enlighten our mental darkness, and try to alleviate our spiritual sorrow; yet alas!" he added, in a melancholy voice, "you tell us nothing about the Sabbath — nothing about those laws which, amidst the flash of lightning and the roar of thunder, were revealed to Moses on Sinai's mount!" He subsequently produced a book called "*Teheesas Samhat*," the laws concerning the Sabbath; but,

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on having some of its pages translated into *Amharic*, we found that it contained so many contradictions, and was interlarded with so many legends, that our entire audience, notwithstanding their deference and esteem for the desert prophet, joined in protesting against its authority.

The three days to which our stay at *Adeida Miriam* was limited, passed imperceptibly away; and the time again arrived, when we had to strike our tents and betake ourselves to the wearisome road. This incessant locomotion was very distasteful to our people, but the distribution of penny looking-glasses among the women, and new *mattebs* among the men, soon restored their equanimity. *Faras*, an uncouth old soldier, who, during his military career, had contracted many bad tastes, was the most insubordinate of the lot. His unfortunate wife, the fifth, rumour whispered, that had enjoyed that precarious title, led a hard existence under the marital sway of the everlasting grumbler. Conjugal disagreements, among half-a dozen slenderly united couples, we could not prevent; and, as the parties themselves mutually regarded such incidents as pleasant variations in the monotony of life, we permitted them to indulge, to their hearts' content, in this peculiar amusement. To the application of the hippopotamus whip, which is in great reputation in Ethiopia, we had an inveterate objection, and, however beneficial a few lashes might occasionally have proved, we allowed no one to use any other weapon than a voluble tongue, which, in general, both parties understood equally well how to apply.

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The *Wotadder* * *Faras*, who highly disapproved of our roving disposition, had several times infringed this regulation; but, as the last beating inflicted on his wife induced her to lodge a formal complaint, we ordered his instant dismissal from our service. To lose a well-paid † place, and to forfeit two cows, the dowry of his spouse, who had no particular inclination to have her shoulder scarified with his cudgel, humbled the braggart, and, with a stone on his neck, he declared, in the presence of the village authorities, that, if we allowed him to retain his situation, he would be a perfect pattern of a faithful and affectionate husband. Upon that promise the stone was removed, and the crestfallen savage never again ventured to maltreat his wife.

Our visitors had dispersed to their respective homes, —the ponderous logs heaped up in piles were kindled, —and night—cool and refreshing night, laden with balmy breezes—softly spread her sable mantle around our cheerful and happy camp. The burning heat, and perpetual excitement of preaching in a new and not very easy language, had exhausted our strength, and we eagerly sought our bed of fresh gathered rushes, to recruit the wearied frame for the projected midnight's march. A few friendly peasants and inquiring *Falashas*, bearing presents of milk and bread for our evening repast, were the only strangers allowed

* Soldier.

† Our men-servants got four dollars, or 16*s.* 8*d.*; and the women three dollars, or 12*s.* 6*d.* per annum, besides food. Natives seldom pay more than one or two dollars per year.

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to remain, all others were forbidden to intrude into our bivouac. Two female figures, however, muffled in white *shamas*, and moving stealthily about in an adjacent copse, excited my suspicion, and I sent our *asash* to request them to seek a more appropriate shelter. They evidently understood the order; for, before the man could execute his commission, both had rushed into our camp, and were kneeling before me, crying, "Justice, *Abiet!* justice, *Abiet!*" The matter was soon explained. *Hailu*, one of our most active and useful servants, had, on a former visit to *Alava*, formed the acquaintance of a decent young girl; and, as the lady had a few cows, and he a dollar or two, an alliance was formed, and the happy pair pledged, before several witnesses, their mutual vows of fidelity and unalterable attachment. Constancy being a virtue that does not thrive in Abyssinia, the false husband soon grew tired of his loving wife; and, under the pretext of attending a neighbouring market, the scoundrel decamped. Weeks and months rolled slowly by, but no *Hailu* returned to his partner's desolate home. That he had actually deserted her after so short a period of nuptial life, her inexperienced and guileless heart would not believe. She was willing to bemoan him as dead, but she recoiled from thinking him faithless. The report that the lost *Hailu*, together with a new wife, had reappeared at *Alava*, in the retinue of the white men, dissipated her fanciful dream; and, accompanied by her mother, she immediately set out to confront the perjured villain. At the conclusion of her story, which she

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narrated in an impressive and smooth flow of words, she raised her large tearful eyes upwards, and imploringly added, "Now you, who love and preach Christ, you will do justice to an injured wife—the mother of a helpless babe!"

Unfortunately such derelictions are not disreputable in a country, where marriage is considered a mere temporary contract, which both parties may break whenever they feel disposed to separate. The poor woman no doubt attached more than usual importance to the troth she had plighted, and, although her honourable devotion was very ill-requited, still, according to established custom, she could not prefer any legal claim upon her worthless husband. To afford her, however, some satisfaction, we offered to send the fellow away, and to give her his year's wages,—a proposal which met with her unqualified approbation. To our aristocratic friend before referred to, and other experienced village authorities, who had been requested by some busybody to assist in our deliberations, the punishment appeared quite incompatible with the offence; and, in deference to their opinion, we reduced the damages to two dollars, which all agreed was a fortune that would bring to the feet of the lady all the beaux in the district. After the satisfactory adjustment of this second conjugal squabble, we wrapt ourselves in the folds of the soft *shama*, and seriously laid down to enjoy a few hours' sleep.

At midnight, just at the time when in a tropical clime youth and age enjoy healthy repose, we mounted

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our mules, and prepared to start. The talk and laughter of our people, who averred that no one in his right senses would travel by night, informed the villagers that we were about to move, and, notwithstanding the habitual laziness of the Abyssinians, many left their warm couches to give a valedictory blessing to the departing missionaries.

We had several adventures during our nocturnal journey. One tall fellow, in groping drowsily along, came in collision with the ponderous bough of a gnarled tree, which severely tested the metal of his hard skull; others, by using too freely the gift of speech, and too little the sense of sight, tumbled into prickly thickets,



and rent the air with cries for succour. These trifling mishaps, however, did not interrupt the mirthful

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humour of our party; and when at dawn we reached the river *Keena*, the boundary line between *Alava* and *Dagossa*, those who had received scratches, and those who had escaped unscathed, united in declaring that the Franks were a clever race, and understood best how to traverse the *kolla*, without incurring the risk of a dangerous fever. After a brief rest, we made a selection of the least tired of our party, and, leaving the rest in charge of the sumpter mules, lost no time in prosecuting our journey. At noon the fierce and scorching atmosphere compelled us to halt at a place not far from *Shargee*; and there, to our infinite satisfaction, our old friends the *Falashas*, and also the *Amharas*, most hospitably brought an abundance of bread and milk for our evening repast.

Before we set out, the whole *Amhara* population, together with their priest—a stupid-looking man, assembled around us. We asked them many questions about their religious belief, and their hopes of salvation. The poor and ignorant people naturally turned to their priest for a reply, but they might as well have expected an answer from the fragments of rock which lay strewn over the turf. We gave them some account of the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the sanctifying work of the Spirit, and exhorting them to reflect seriously on these sublime subjects, we got into our saddles and rode off.

A march through a most lovely country of mountains, wooded to their summits, and deep glens through which the impetuous streams rolled over rocky beds, brought us to *Dangall*, where we encamped on a

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marshy meadow, alive with a species of most savage and bloodthirsty musquito. Their sting, which was like the sharp prick of a lancet, kept us the whole night in a state of feverish excitement. About dawn when their insatiable thirst had been glutted in our blood, and we hoped to close our weary eyelids, a fanatical monk annoyed us with the husky shout of *Gaita!* We told him to come later, but we might as well have ordered the sun, in consideration of our short night's rest, not to rise, as to persuade a fanatical ascetic to attend to a polite request. On getting up, our pertinacious disturber told us that he had come to return us the Bible we had given him, as he dreaded lest the contents of the New Testament should undermine his faith. We took back the sacred volume, and then, in a sharp lecture, reminded him of his fearful guilt in preferring darkness to light, and the performance of a few worthless and hollow ceremonies dictated by superstitious fear, to the momentous and saving truths revealed by the Spirit of God. Many *Falashas* from Dangall and from the neighbouring settlements now joined us, and a long and warm discussion ensued, in which the monk, who enjoyed a great reputation for sanctity, most keenly taxed the powers of his lungs.

The sun was shining with its wonted brightness and dazzling splendour through a cloudless azure sky, when we loaded our animals and quitted the swampy plain. We had scarcely proceeded a mile, when, on looking back, we saw a party of *Falashas* running after us in breathless haste. Fearing that something serious had occurred, we slackened our pace, but to our surprise

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we found, when the panting group came up to us, that they were priests and debterahs from various settlements, some of whom (a thing seldom done in Abyssinia, on account of the numerous wild beasts) had been travelling the greater part of the night in order to overtake us, that they might thus secure copies of the Scriptures before our stock was exhausted. They had heard on the road of the fanatical monk, and in indignant language blamed his conduct. They accompanied us two miles further to a Mohammedan village, where, for several hours, we dilated on the wonderful theme of redemption, which we showed, by numerous quotations, ran like a golden thread through every page of the inspired volume, speaking in one place through types and emblematic ceremonies, and in another by visions and prophecies; now appealing to the yearning affections of the heart, and then addressing itself to the reason and intellect; containing warnings of woe and wrath to the impenitent on one page, and promises of bliss and joy to the humble and contrite in the other. "In this way," we added, "God, in His infinite mercy, has solved for us every enigma, satisfied every doubt, and removed every false plea." They were very serious, and promised to attend our meetings, if we settled amongst them.

At *Tschelga*, as elsewhere, the *Falashas* crowded around us, and anxiously inquired after those "old paths" which they and their fathers have so long forsaken. Several young priests, whose handsome features bore sad and cruel traces of a severe desert

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pilgrimage, volunteered to accompany me to Jerusalem; but as the mountains of Ethiopia are far better adapted to implant the seed of peace into the troubled heart of an untutored African, than either Syria or any other foreign country, I declined, on the present as on all former occasions, to accede to such proposals.

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CHAPTER XX.

Choice of a Station—Unsuccessful Missionary Efforts—Influence of Missions to the *Falashas*—Hopeful Symptoms—Conversion of Ethiopia—Spread of Christianity—Dangerous Enemies—The Jesuits—Superstition—Heretical Doctrines—Incipient Reforms—Ordination—Celibacy—Mental Culture.

THE success which had attended our exploratory mission, determined us to make still more vigorous and concentrated efforts for the spiritual regeneration of the remnant of Israel in *Habesh*. His Majesty having kindly granted us full permission to settle wherever we felt disposed, we carefully surveyed the field, and, after mature deliberation, fixed on *Genda* as our centre of operations. A glance at the map will show that this place is geographically the most eligible for a station. Situated about eight miles north of the *Tsana*, *Genda* forms, as it were, a focus from whence light may radiate to illumine the benighted provinces of *Tschelga*, *Armatgioho*, *Quara*, and *Dembea*.

During the rainy season, when all communication is interrupted by the swell of the rivers, our missionaries have here still within easy reach a population of about two thousand souls, upon whom their

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undivided efforts during four months will not be misspent.

Another feature which recommends this spot for a central station is its salubrity. Abyssinia, unlike other parts of the wide continent of Africa, is composed of mountains and valleys subject to the utmost variety of climate. The lowland, or *kolla*, rich in vegetation, and abounding in the noblest trees and plants of the tropics, is, for more than six months in the year, overspread by an atmosphere of fever fatal to the most robust European, and the lofty mountain tops are again too difficult of access, and too exposed to bleak winds, to afford a desirable residence even for a northern frame. On the elevated plateaux, where nature enjoys perpetual spring, and the winds are ever balmy and fresh, no fear need be entertained of being suffocated by heat, or chilled by cold. Our choice of the rich pasture land of *Genda* is, in this respect, most happy; and the missionaries who may be located there, or on similar tracts, may confidently dismiss all fear as to the salubrity of the climate, while the magnificence of the scenery is unrivalled in any other part of the world.

The field, thus eminently adapted to an European constitution, is also one of the most populous in the whole country. There are, within a day's journey of *Genda*, hundreds and thousands of *Falashas*, *Kamants*, Christians, and Moslems, who, without exception, will be more or less influenced by our mission. In former years, intermittent efforts were made to regenerate the Abyssinian Church, but the labours of the

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foreigners soon excited the ever-watchful jealousy of the priesthood, and they were expelled the country. Now, in our work for the evangelization of the *Falashas*, we are not exposed to such a contingency, and yet indirectly we may, under God, be the means of infusing life into that dead Church, and light into that dark land.

In expressing this pleasing anticipation, I am not indulging in a fanciful rev e. During my exploratory tour in the country, I was frequently amazed to see vast multitudes of *Amharas* crowding around us to hear our addresses to the Jews. Occasionally the theme of our discourses led to a serious controversy between the two parties. The *Amhara* would accuse the Jew of unbelief, and the Jew the *Amhara* of idolatry. The controversy would often wax warm, as the debate became more serious; but invariably before they parted both parties would admit that they were in error, and that they required teachers to bring them back to the truth they had forsaken. The latest tidings from that remote land, which mention that numbers of *Falashas* are fully persuaded of the truth of the Gospel, and anxious to be baptized, also announce that several *Amharic* priests have attended the meetings of the catechumens, and are diligently studying their Bibles. These incipient movements lead us to cherish the pleasing hope that the *Falashas* will yet, under God, be the medium of communicating to the Ethiopian that very truth, which pride and suspicion would never allow him to accept from the envied stranger.

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The unexpected breath of heaven, now agitating the dry bones of Israel on the mountain-tops of Africa, seems an unmistakable indication that our work enjoys the Divine favour. The only obstacle to be apprehended is the intolerant spirit of the hierarchy. It is true, the Archbishop solemnly promised that if we formed congregations of Jewish believers, they should not be obliged to conform to the rules and rites of his own community, but that they should have toleration without schism,—and liberty of worship without separation from the Church. This anomalous union may perhaps be designed by an all-wise Providence to produce that moral and spiritual reformation, which every other effort has hitherto failed to achieve; but it may also rouse the slumbering demon of persecution, and subject the newly-gathered converts to a baptism of fire, and a trying and sifting ordeal of their faith. An eventuality of this kind we must be prepared to expect, whenever the great truth which at present is moving the heart of the unbelieving *Falasha* shall come into collision with the pride, ignorance, and superstition of the corrupt *Amhara*. There is, however, an immortality stamped on the work in which we are engaged; and the seed of the Gospel once implanted in the soul, will become more firmly rooted by its resistance to the passing storm. Our mission among the *Falashas* need not, therefore, inspire solicitude lest its efforts should be neutralized by persecution, or destroyed by violence. On the contrary, if our converts have to sustain a severe trial of their faith and confidence, we may expect, from the

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ardour and warmth of their temper, that they will evince such energy and resignation, such heroism and self-sacrifice, as will throw contempt on the wrath of their oppressors, and secure to Central Africa a blessing it never yet possessed—a Christianity full of life and power—a Christianity full of energy and spirit.

From the *Falashas* let us turn to the Christians, or *Amharas*. Christianity, the national belief, was introduced into Abyssinia in the beginning of the fourth century by *Frumentius* and *Edesius*, the sons of a Syrian merchant, who, on a voyage to India, were driven by adverse winds to seek refuge on the rocky coast of the Red Sea. Seized by savage shepherds, their venerable father and the crew were at once murdered, and the future Apostles of Ethiopia would have shared the same fate, had not their pleasing appearance and submissive bearing won them the good graces of their captors. Animated by the noble ambition of subjugating the country of their exile and bondage to the sway of the Redeemer, the two captives, immediately on their arrival at Court, whither they had been conducted, set themselves to achieve this glorious enterprise. Their laudable efforts were crowned with the most wonderful success. The Emperor and his Court became the first converts to the new faith; and the religion espoused by those in authority soon found adherents among the common people. *Athanasius*, to whom *Frumentius* communicated these happy tidings, gratefully acknowledged the missionary's zeal by consecrating him Bishop of the new diocese; and the bond of union, cemented

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fifteen centuries ago between the Alexandrian and Abyssinian Churches, has continued firm and unbroken to the present day.

The sword of Islam, which had extinguished the fires of the *Magi* in Persia, and uprooted the idolatries of *Sabianism* in Arabia, at length sought to sweep the Cross from the mountain-regions of Ethiopia. Nursed in war, and expert in the use of the lance, the whole country united their forces to defend their religion and their home against the invading foe. Many a flourishing province between *Nubia* in the north, and *Enerea* in the south (where some of the heads of the idolatrous tribes still retain a Christian appellation, and observe certain Christian festivals) succumbed to the fierce onslaught of the fanatic Moslem, and the no less sanguinary inroads of the rising Pagan. Formidable assaults from without, and rebellion and treachery from within, brought that ancient monarchy almost to the brink of ruin and dissolution.

In the sixteenth century the disciples of Loyola, in the hope of giving *éclat* to their new order, conceived the project of adding Abyssinia to the patrimony of St. Peter. Under the specious pretext of aiding the natives against their hereditary foes, the Arabs and Turks, they obtained permission to enter the country, and, by intrigues and cabal, succeeded in gaining many powerful partisans. But the work, supported by fraud and murder, was destined to end in the discomfiture of its abettors. Hatred, malice, and all other evil passions, were enlisted in the struggle; and

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although royalty for a time upheld the new creed, the vaunted triumphs of Rome were at last neutralized through the excessive violence and flagrant enormities of her own sanguinary agents. Since that period they have repeatedly tried to regain a footing in their lost territory; and their last representative, Monsignor de Jacobis, an able and learned bishop, might have succeeded in his attempt, had not the Jesuitical propensity to blend religion with politics entirely defeated his object, and compelled him and his friends to seek safety in flight.

The Abyssinian Church, although she has pertinaciously resisted the innovations of Rome, and the no less dangerous assaults of Islam, merits but little praise for her attachment to a creed which is a libel upon the Gospel, and a caricature on the true Christian faith. Weaned from idolatry, without being thoroughly enlightened by the truth, she soon substituted asceticism for purity of life, and a mechanical performance of certain rites for the true worship of the living God. Fasts and penances, the adoration of the Virgin, and the intercession of Saints, together with the practice of circumcision, the observance of the Jewish Sabbath, and of all the Mosaic restrictions as to clean and unclean animals, form the essential teachings of her creed. A beggar in the street would in vain ask charity in the name of the Saviour, but let him pronounce the magical word "Miriam," and a humble apology, or a small pittance, will be the reply. To adore an image is considered a heinous offence; but to fall down before the coarsest daub, or

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the wooden *Tabot*, is the highest act of Christian devotion. Fasts are observed most rigorously; and the wretch who is rioting in every shameful vice will shrink with horror from the man who touches animal food during the interdicted seasons. Vice and immorality are even regulated by a peculiar ecclesiastical code; and a conscientious sinner, will not hesitate to consult his spiritual adviser, as to the day and hour when he may with impunity break a Divine law.

The cause of this spiritual degradation must in part be attributed to the selfishness of an idle priesthood, but more especially to their deplorable ignorance of the Word of God. A round of worthless ceremonials, and the daily repetition of the Liturgy in a language not understood by the people, and very often a dead letter even to the officiating priest, constitutes the service of the Church. At one time the King expressed his determination to supplant the ecclesiastical Ethiopic by the vernacular *Amharic;* but as this would have subjected the priests to the trouble of reading what they now repeat by rote, such a storm of opposition was raised that, for the present, the project is in abeyance.

Indifferent as the Abyssinian divines are about the grand doctrine of the Redemption, they have ever been most violent in their defence of certain opinions on the mysterious subject of the Incarnation. According to their system of theology, our blessed Lord had three births. Christ proceeding from the Father they style the eternal birth; Christ born of the Virgin they designate the temporal birth; and Christ anointed by

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the Holy Ghost, or the union of the Divine and human nature in the Virgin, they term the third birth. The controversy between those who held the threefold birth, and those who approximated in their views to the other Oriental Churches, has at times waxed so fierce, that the sword, instead of the Bible, has often been called on to decide the contest.

Aboona Salama, on his appointment to the vacant See of Ethiopia, actively exerted himself to heal the divisions which these unprofitable speculations had created in the Church. His orthodox sentiments, for which he is indebted to the Church Missionary Society's School at Cairo, where he was formerly a pupil, did not meet the approbation of his clergy, and for several years his life and property were exposed to imminent danger. About ten years ago, his archiepiscopal residence at *Gondar* was pillaged by the infatuated priesthood, and he himself only escaped maltreatment by a timely flight into *Tigré*. On the accession of King Theodoros, a loud clamour was raised for a more orthodox *Aboona*; but to the general surprise, the royal herald made proclamation that his Majesty approved of the scriptural doctrines of the *Aboona*, and that in future all who adhered to the obnoxious dogma of the threefold birth would be taught obedience by the *giraffe*. The *Shoa* clergy denounced this decision as arbitrary and tyrannical, as indeed it was; but an application of the promised whip wrought a wonderful change among that insubordinate body. Within the last few years several attempts have been made to revive the old contro-

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versy; and it is quite certain that, in spite of the giraffe, the deeply-rooted error will not be eradicated till a new generation has displaced the present ignorant body of ecclesiastics.

The Abyssinian Church, in common with all other Christian communities in Asia and Africa, is strictly Episcopal. The *Aboona*, or Primate, who is consecrated to his office by the Patriarch of Alexandria, the revered successor of St. Mark, can alone confer the priestly title. Every candidate, before presenting himself for ordination, must have acquired some knowledge in the reading of the sacred language of Ethiopia, and in the complicated ceremonies of the liturgical service. On the day appointed for ordination, the Primate, in full canonicals, and seated on the episcopal throne, receives the applicants for the sacred office. All being properly ranged before the chair of St. Mark, each candidate solemnly abjures the old heresy of the three births, and then, instead of the imposition of hands, receives the *Aboona's* consecrating breath. Former Archbishops, less scrupulous than the present successor of *Frumentius*, indiscriminately breathed on all, whether qualified or not, who could pay the requisite fee of two salts—fourpence. This abuse of the episcopal office is happily now no longer practised.

Deacons are selected from among boys, who are only allowed to serve in the church till they attain the age of twelve or thirteen; after that period their purity of life is suspected, and they are no longer considered fit to approach the sacred shrine of the

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Tabot. The Bishop and monks may not marry, while the priests may; and as, on the death of their wives, they cannot contract a second alliance, the reverend wooers invariably choose for their partners the most robust and sprightly lasses in the land.

The *debterahs*, or scribes, constitute the lowest, but most influential body in the Church. These worthies enjoy no ecclesiastical rank, are under no ecclesiastical discipline, and yet no service can be properly performed unless they take part in it. Their chief duty consists in chanting the Psalms and Liturgy, but their uncouth gesticulation and discordant shouting, instead of elevating devotion, tend rather, at least in European estimation, to convert the service of God into a sinful burlesque, and the sanctuary into a bedlam. The scanty learning of the country is exclusively monopolized by this order; and they are so proud of their erudition, that they deem it a disgrace to exchange, by the breathing of the *Aboona*, the proud title of *debterah* for the less learned appellation of *kas*, or priest.

These literati, notwithstanding their better acquaintance with the sacred volume and the lives of the saints, are considered the most arrant scoundrels in the land. *Gondar*, which contains a considerable number of the fraternity, is notorious for the dissolute profligacy of its inhabitants; and it is proverbial throughout the country that wherever *debterahs* abound there vice and immorality thrive.

Ignorant and depraved as the Abyssinians are, they yet possess many traits of character which, if rightly

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developed, may hereafter raise them to be a great civilized Christian nation. Superior in mental culture, religious sentiments, and social condition to the tribes and races around them, they only require to become thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of the Gospel, and their ardent temper, purified from its gross passions, will prompt them to carry the message of salvation to those densely-populated regions of Central Africa which have never felt the breath of Divine truth, and have never heard the glad tidings of redeeming love. To effect this happy consummation no great influx of European missionaries is required; nay, a pious rivalry between different religious Societies would defeat the very object sought to be attained. The Abyssinians are a shrewd, suspicious, and jealous people. The Jesuits taught them a lesson which many centuries will not obliterate. The hope, therefore, of that nation's spiritual regeneration is, for the present at least, and perhaps till great political changes occur, completely bound up with the evangelization of the Jews. Let the *Falashas*, who have for more than two thousand years so wonderfully, and under various vicissitudes, retained their national distinctiveness and isolation on the highlands of Abyssinia, be brought to the Cross of the Redeemer, and there will then be the men and the means, morally and physically qualified, to subdue that unhappy and sin-stained land to the obedience of the Gospel of Christ.

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CHAPTER XXI.

Physiognomy—Dress—The Toilet—Ornaments—Shoes—Milliners—Mode of Washing—Furniture—Retinue—Minerals—Undeveloped Resources—Cotton—Bright Destiny.

In visiting a remote country, the appearance of the inhabitants produces the most striking impressions. The idea that the dress, features, and bearings of a people tolerably well indicate their intellectual acquirements, and comparative progress in the arts of civilized life, may perhaps account for this interest. Thus, on entering Abyssinia, the traveller at once perceives that he is in the midst of a race superior in every respect to all the other tribes of Central Africa. The negro cast of countenance—the stamp of Ham's oppressed descendants, almost disappears on the Alpine heights of Ethiopia, and, instead of it, the men and women one sees possess features and symmetry of form that may justly be termed handsome. To give a full delineation of their person is an easy task, since in every respect a genuine Abyssinian resembles a bronze statue, which the greatest sculptor might safely take for his model. In size the true medium is between five and six feet. Corpulent persons I have never seen amongst them, which may be accounted for by their continual exposure to the open air, and their

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inartificial mode of existence. Erect and slender, they are still not devoid of muscular strength, nor of that symmetrical roundness which so much contributes to the beauty of the human frame. Their complexion, unlike that of other dark races, is very varied. The light olive-brown certainly predominates; but it is not unusual to meet in a single town or village individuals who exhibit every shade of colour, from the pale Egyptian on the Nile at Cairo to the dark Negro in the malarious jungles near the equator. This peculiarity is, however, not so notable amongst the highlanders as amongst those who dwell near the low border districts, where a free intermixture with the black *Shankgallas* produces a marked change in the tint of the skin, and the expression of the countenance.

The costume of the Abyssinian is exceedingly simple. Men of all ranks, from the King to the beggar, wear a *shama*, or loose dress of white cotton, which, in graceful folds, is thrown over the shoulders, so as to leave the hands and arms free to carry spear and buckler. The softness of the web, and the depth of the red border round the bottom of this convenient garb, indicate the social position of the wearer, and this is so minutely defined, that any one who should presume to ape his betters would, in all probability, obtain a lesson or two on dress from the imperial *giraffe*-holder. Beneath the *shama* the aristocrat dons his silken, damask, or velvet *kamees;* but this is a privilege only granted to a few magnates, and those whom the King delights to honour. Trowsers of the same

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material as the *shama* are worn by all, and also the cotton waistcloth, which is so long, that when wound



round the waist, it serves the purpose of armour, in warding off blows, or in protecting from the thrust of sword or lance. When engaged in battle the *shama* is exchanged for the *dino*, a mere piece of skin, sometimes of the lion or leopard, but more commonly

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of the sheep. Those made by the saddlers at *Gondar* are lined with red cotton stuff, or gay chintz; but as the common soldiers cannot generally afford so costly an article, the majority content themselves with a half-dressed sheep's hide, which is fastened by a strip of leather around their necks. The great chiefs, like the Spartans of old, during an engagement, wear scarlet jackets or cloaks, in order that in a sharp hand-to-hand combat, the enemy may not perceive the wounds he has inflicted, and so cut off his opponent's retreat.

The description of the men may, with little variation, be applied to the women. In their appearance and form, the Abyssinian ladies are certainly not undeserving the fame they have ever enjoyed among their sallow and dark-skinned neighbours. Round and well proportioned, they are particularly favoured with high and broad foreheads, aquiline noses, and eyes which, notwithstanding, their unpleasing large size and dark brilliancy, are so tempered by a soft dreamy expression, that they rather enhance than detract from what orientals consider the perfection of beauty. Their teeth are tolerably white and even, but do not come up to those of the negro. The Abyssinians, however, surpass every other African tribe, in the luxuriant growth of their hair. Black as jet, and sometimes even as straight and glossy as that of the European, it is much to be regretted that neither the men nor the women should be satisfied with a gift nature has so liberally bestowed on them, but seek to improve it either by shaving a part of the head, or by the appli-

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cation of an abominable coating of rancid butter. The fear of a too rapid multiplication of certain parasitic insects, that might otherwise settle in the uncombed fleece, may perhaps have originated the custom, but whatever brought it first into vogue, the disgusting practice is at present considered the height of fashion, and, of course, every Abyssinian lady delights in its indulgence. The mode of trimming the hair depends on its length and on the silkiness of its texture, and partly also on the position in life of its possessor. Servants and peasants generally twist theirs into an entangled mass of curls, till it somewhat resembles a lawyer's wig; town's-people, on the contrary, have a great passion for plaits, which always remind one of Isis, Sesostris, and all the other notabilities on the monuments of ancient Egypt; and not a few amongst the *beau-monde* allow their raven locks to fall over their dubiously-coloured necks, in not ungraceful *negligé*.

Particular as the Abyssinians are in the management of the hair, they are somewhat indifferent about the more important matter of dress. Ladies of rank, besides the usual under-garment, and a loose shirt reaching below the knees, and neatly embroidered in front and on the cuffs, envelop themselves, on special occasions, in a fine *shama*, with a gay silk border, or in a gorgeously coloured cloak of English or German cloth. Women of the lower ranks, however, dispense with all these superfluities. A wide sack *kamees*, when at home, and the usual winding-sheet over it when going abroad, form

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their entire outfit. Some even discard these luxuries, and in their stead merely wear round the waist a cotton rag, or a dressed skin, which they fasten just above the loins with such peculiar tact that, during a journey, or when engaged in domestic duties, this primitive garb never becomes disarranged.

Ornaments are the rage of rich and poor. Those who possess means carry their love for all kinds of trinkets to such an excess, that they often have more than three pounds weight of silver bells, chains, and little scent boxes dangling down over their bosom, besides all the other *et ceteras*, such as rosaries, bangles, and an endless variety of charms against the *Bouda*, *Zar*, and every evil to which ladies in Abyssinia, as in other lands, are liable. The less favoured daughters of fortune, who cannot afford to spend Maria Theresa dollars, adorn their slightly covered or uncovered bosoms with large black and yellow beads, a blue silk *matteb*, and a string of potent amulets neatly sown in square leather cases.

The feet, which are small and well shaped, neither the men nor the women expose to the agony of the native shoes. A few stylish ladies and conceited priests may occasionally be seen to indulge in this extravagance; but then they appear so uncomfortable, and so piteously ill-at-ease, that one is almost inclined to regard them as penitents, who, to atone for certain sins, compress their toes in a clumsily-carved instrument of torture.

Fond as the Abyssinian women are of embroidered garments and other fineries, it is strange that they

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should never try to gain even a slight acquaintance with the use of the needle. High and low alike depend upon their male friends for every stitch in their dress. Tastes, of course, vary in different countries; but I confess that it always provoked me to see a tall, bearded fellow acting the dressmaker, and a slender girl performing the functions of the groom. Several times I tried to introduce a reform among our own people, but the very attempt to allot to each his own proper work produced such a storm of discontent, that I gave up the matter in despair.

But if it is provoking to see a man pilfering the needle, it is still more aggravating to see him monopolise the laundry. It is true, the Abyssinians have as strong a prejudice against clean linen, as against a clean face; still, whenever, during the course of the year, the shirt or shama requires a little scrubbing, a big fellow, far better adapted to plough the field, performs the agreeable job. Soap the operation does not require, nor can Ethiopia boast of this important article. The buds of a plant called *endott*,* after being dried and pulverized, is made to answer the same purpose. Tubs, soda, potash, and all the other ingredients employed by us in the destruction of linen, are there dispensed with. A large stiff hide, spread out in a hole or between stones, so as to give it a concave form, constitutes the apparatus in which the dirty clothes and *endott* are placed. This task accomplished, the washerman pours over it a sufficient quantity of water to saturate the whole, and then

* Phytolecca Abyssinica.

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boldly marches into it, and jumps and stamps until his feet are buried up to the ankles in an ashy lather. This process, if necessary, is repeated two or three times; but our own wash, we were often tauntingly informed (probably because it was considered unmanly), never required more than one operation.

The adage—"Man wants but little here below"—seems a palpable absurdity when uttered by people who live in rooms that have the appearance of regular furniture shops, so that one cannot move without a nervous apprehension of coming in collision with an exquisitely inlaid table, a valuable classic vase, or a beautiful statuette, that would look still more beautiful if it had a slight additional drapery around its gracefully-chiselled limbs, and many other encumbrances that are considered indispensable. Now in Ethiopia, where civilization first took its rise, and then, like the fertilizing Nile, poured its treasure into Egypt, whence it found a way into Greece and the rest of the ancient civilised world, no such inconsistency would attach to the use of the proverb, for there a few earthen pots and jars, a tray or two in which to bake the thin bread, and half a dozen spears, are the usual furniture of an ordinary establishment. Wicker baskets, serving also the purpose of a table, and a variety of large horns in which hydromel is carried on journeys, together with shields, swords, and a few monstrous pomade-pots of dried gourds, may also be seen around the wattle huts of officers and merchants; but the stationary *baal acker*, or peasant, is quite content if he has the requisite pottery in which to prepare his daily food.

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The Abyssinian, whether at home or on a journey, retires to rest an hour or two after sunset. Bedsteads, or *algas*, being everywhere scarce, he spreads a bullock's hide over rushes, and sleeps as soundly as he could on down. Families huddle together in groups; and it not unfrequently happens, on grand visiting or market days, that half a dozen couples, and perhaps an equal proportion of hopeful progeny, will be rolled up like sacks in a shed which a couple of Europeans would find too narrow to breathe in. Immediately on rising the women attend to their domestic work; whilst the men either idly dawdle about, or, if engaged in agricultural pursuits, repair to the field. Their implements of husbandry are of the rudest description. The plough is a rough beam, with a crooked handle to guide it, and a wedge, forming a vertical angle, to cut the soil. Straight parallel furrows the Ethiopian husbandman does not consider of any importance. His oxen or mules may run in all directions; he is quite sure that, if the earth is only broken, the seed scattered over it will yield an abundant harvest. This kind of work, which is the heaviest the men perform, admits of no comparison with the more onerous duties devolving on the poor women. In a large household, where a good number of females are required, some go early in the morning to collect wood, and others to fetch water, while not a few busily employ their hands in cleaning the stables, or in preparing bread, *shiro*, *dillik*, and *wotz* for breakfast. To remove the husks from the grain before it is washed and ground, is regarded by all as a most tiring job. We usually

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employed two to relieve each other at this occupation; but the unfeeling natives, who have no such con-



sideration, sometimes force their female servants or slaves to stand over the rude mortar till their arms become almost paralysed, and they are ready to drop from sheer exhaustion and fatigue.

In speaking of menials, I will just mention that in the homes of the great, their number is literally legion. Twenty men and six or seven women are the usual attendants of a respectable merchant or royal officer. Their wages, as already stated, vary from

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two to three dollars per year, but even this pittance is not always paid. Contempt for the ill-requited labour of husbandry, and the great lack of other useful industry, may be assigned as the chief causes of the abject servitude to which more than half the population is reduced.

The remedy for the many evils which at present afflict this unhappy land, next to a purer faith, lies in the development of its vast material resources. Favoured with a beautiful climate, possessing a most fertile soil, and abounding in the utmost variety of natural productions, Abyssinia contains all the elements calculated to make a nation wealthy and prosperous. In most provinces iron is found in abundance, both in the low valleys and the high mountain ranges. The process of smelting, though effected with no other machinery than two rude hand-bellows and a hole in the ground, produces, nevertheless, a metal which establishes the superiority of the ore. At *Debra Tabor*, where the king has opened a workshop for the manufacture and repair of arms, under the superintendence of two of the artisans sent out by the Bishop of Jerusalem, I saw several bars, which, I was assured, needed only more skilful preparation to equal the best English pig-iron. Coal, another valuable article, we ourselves found on the banks of the *Quanque*, and there is every probability that this fossil exists in other parts of the country. These two useful products, which may at some future period prove the means of covering central Africa with a web of railways, would be of small benefit to

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Abyssinia, did she not also possess the more precious staples requisite to insure her a great and splendid future. Coffee, ivory, civet, gold, together with wax, honey and butter, are at present the sole exports to *Massowah* and *Matamma;* but whilst these articles could at once be easily quadrupled, the prolific soil offers the widest area for the cultivation of indigo, the sugar-cane, a variety of cereals, and every product of the tropics.

The most promising plant, however, which the territory of King *Theodoros* could furnish to an unlimited extent, is cotton. This subject was ably advocated by Dr. Beke, before the Manchester Cotton Supply Association, in June, 1861. The Doctor, from his own observations while travelling in the country, became so impressed with its capabilities in this respect, that he offered to put down 1,000*l.*, if twenty-four other gentlemen would advance a similar amount, towards the establishment of a factory on the outskirts of the elevated table-land. Now, at a moment when the unhappy conflict on the other side of the Atlantic is crippling the energies of the strong, and arresting the activity of the industrious, the manufacturer, as well as the statesman, ought not to forget that Abyssinia and the border districts, have been ever famous for the abundance and unrivalled excellence of their cotton plantations.

King *Theodoros,* as is well known, has always manifested great partiality for Europeans; and any project calculated to enhance the wealth of his empire, and the stability of his throne, is sure to meet with

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his countenance and support. Since the death of Mr. Bell, whose judicious counsels exerted the most happy influence on the conduct and actions of the despot, some unfavourable changes have characterized his proceedings; still it admits of little doubt that the present ruler of Abyssinia, with all his faults,—which the circumstances of his birth and the condition of his country must in some degree palliate,—is a man far in advance of his people in ideas and aspirations; and, whether commercial enterprise is to find a new sphere, or the interests of oppressed humanity in Africa are to be promoted, by a little circumspection and proper judgment, these and other desirable objects may be surely advanced whilst such a man as King *Theodoros* occupies the throne of Ethiopia. Hitherto neither the sovereign nor his subjects have had much opportunity for forming a correct estimate of the various sources of wealth that lie within their reach, or, what is of far greater import, of becoming acquainted with the beauty of that Gospel in which they so loudly profess to believe; but, let the missionary quietly and judiciously pursue his evangelistic work; let the fostering hand of trade develop the hidden treasures of the land, and an impulse will be given to industry, a stimulus to civilisation, and a salutary power to law; and the only nation in Central Africa bearing the name of Christian, and now, alas, notorious for vice, may yet become famous for "whatsoever is honest, lovely, and of good report."

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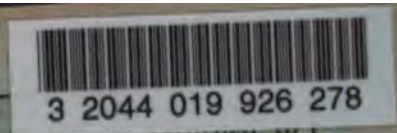
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