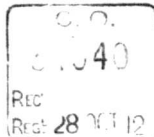


E. AFRICA

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Account

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Date.
1912

26 Oct.

Previous Paper.

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Mr. Doughty by his journey through
Abyssinia.

to report.

Dr. J. F. Fildes

See marked papers on p/ 5-6

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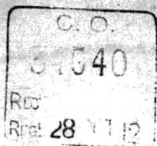
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1912

The Under-Secretary of State,
Foreign Office,
London.



Confidential

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies and, by direction of the Secretary of State, transmits herewith copy of the under-mentioned paper.

Foreign Office,

October 26, 1912.

Reference to previous letter:

Description of Inclosure.

| Name and Date. | Subject. |
|--|---|
| <p>Major Douglas Wylie, August 31.</p> | <p>Journey from Adis Ababa to Massowah.</p> |

EAST AFRICA.

[September 5.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION I.

[AMENDED COPY.]

[37504]

No. 1.

Major Doughty Wylie to Sir Edward Grey.—(Received September 5.)

(Confidential.)

Sir,

Theberton Hall, Leiston, August 31, 1912.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report on my recent journey (March to June 1912) from Adis Ababa to Massowah, via Lekempte, the Blue Nile, Gojam, Lake Tsana, Gondar, Adua, and Asmara.

Objects.

The objects of the journey were: As regards Lekempte, the banks of the Blue Nile, and the Kingdom of Gojam, to learn something of the chiefs, the country, and local politics, and to promote trade with the Soudan.

As regards Lake Tsana, to visit such portions of the shore as might be near the route, with a view to the effect on them of the possible barrage of the Blue Nile, its exit from the lake. This barrage had been recently discussed with the Abyssinian Government, à propos of an offer to construct it made to them by an Italian engineer. Further, to find out what, if any, cotton lands, &c., had been leased to Italians in Dembea, and to get into touch with trade routes to Dunkur and Gallabat.

As regards Gondar, where Italy considers she has a reversionary claim, to learn something of the doings of the Italian agent there, his relations with Ras Waldo Giorgis, purchase or lease of lands, measures to further commerce with Erythrea at the expense of the Soudan, Lake Tsana barrage, &c.

As regards Erythrea, to see the trade routes and the trade with Abyssinia, the commercial agents, colonists, &c., and what could be learnt in a short visit of the Erythrean view of the future of Abyssinia.

As regards Massowah, to see the Asmara Railway and the port, to visit Assab, in view of the rumours of its possible cession to a foreign Power and reported commercial expansion.

I left Adis Ababa on the 16th March, and arrived at Aden on the 24th June, 1912.

A detailed road report will be submitted separately.

Lekempte.

I had long conversations with Dejaz Gabri Egziabir, the ruling Prince, and saw many of his chiefs and much of his country.

Lekempte and Jimma, which I visited last year, are the only two countries now left in Abyssinia under the rule of their hereditary Galla princes. There was a third on the Soudan border, where the Galla Dejaz Jote has now been replaced by Negadras Hasli Giorgis, at present Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Menelek allowed all three Galla kingdoms to remain semi-independent, but Dejaz Jote soon fell into disrepute. The other two are probably, for their size, the most prosperous parts of Abyssinia. Gallas serve their own rulers better than they serve their Abyssinian conquerors. Ras Tesumina, Menelek's general, conquered Gooma and Gore with great cruelty in living men's memory, and only in Menelek's time has it become illegal to sell Gallas as slaves.

There is one reason, other than the natural sympathy between ruled and ruler, to be found for the prosperity of the Galla countries still existing. Both Dejaz Gabri Egziabir and Sultan Abajifar of Jimma, are most intelligent princes, anxious to promote peace and riches in their countries. Further, their tenure of power is long, whereas in Abyssinian-ruled countries it is seldom more than a few years that one ruler remains. As he becomes rich he is recalled to disgorge. Thus too often his first care on arrival is to extort all he can, and his last act on leaving to sweep up everything—men (in the negro—Kaffa—countries), animals, money with which to return, and buy favour.

It is often said that the Gallas will rise against their Abyssinian masters, and well armed as they now are and in superior numbers, reconquer their independence.

It is argued from this idea that Gallas are in favour of foreigners, by whose help they hope to profit, more especially by the help of England, who gives them across the border an example in the Soudan of what better government is effecting.

A Galla insurrection, if it is in the lap of the gods, is one of the possible agents of the break-up of Abyssinia. Both end and means appear to me most undesirable, and to be averted by any fair means we have. Therefore such things should never be mentioned in Galla countries by any Englishman, whose lightest word is afterwards repeated, twisted, and considered as important.

The Dejazmatch has been described by travellers as reserved and suspicious. What I have said may show that his reserve is proper to his position and wise. They forget that, even if the Dejazmatch trusted them personally, he is surrounded by spies and interpreters, and that what is conversation to them is black treason to him and his Abyssinian masters.

We talked of trade, which, unlike some Abyssinians, he begins to understand and is keen to foster. He is alive to the transport rates, which should favour Gambela as against Adis Ababa, to the new bridges, and the importance of certain arrangements with Negadras Hasli Giorgis, and Ras Demisie—his neighbours. I had talked over with Negadras Hasli Giorgis, and also at Bilo, on the road trade with both these chiefs before leaving Adis Ababa, and also at Bilo, on the road to Lékempte, with Tanagarha, Negadras for Ras Demisie. Dejaz Gabri Egziahir said that all he wanted was peace and time to teach his people better things.

Lékempte is a small but, in its way, a thriving State. There is only one resident European trader, or rather Armenian, but agents from Adis Ababa come from time to time. The new bridges across rivers between Lékempte and Gambela, whose construction has been begun, should help this country to export wax, hides, and coffee, and to buy cotton goods. There is in the forests which cover much of the State an immense quantity of ginger growing wild, samples of which have been sent, through the legation, to the Commercial Intelligence Branch in London.

Prices and local details have already been submitted to the Minister at Adis Ababa.

There was in Lékempte a Tigrean from Asmara, who had brought down cotton goods to trade for coffee. For a trader this is a full three months' journey and it seems scarcely possible that it could pay him at the prices given to me. I showed him that there was more profit to be made by Gambela and he said he would try it this season.

The Italian agents naturally do all they can to encourage trade in the Erythraea, but it is surprising to find their merchants so far south. It is possible that the man was really a slave or arms trader, but there was no sign or evidence of it.

Jidda.

The Angur River is the northern boundary of Lékempte. Across it lies part of the country of Ras Demisie, hitherto, I think, unvisited by a white man. From the Angur to Jidda is a four days' journey through forest and over a steep mountain pass.

Jidda or Yiddah is commercially worth little. The chief Negadras Derta puts the trade at 500 mule-loads a-year, which all goes the month's journey to Adis Ababa by a place called Horo and the bridge of the Gude or Gudir River, there joining the Lékempte-Adis Ababa road.

The road which must be followed by Soudan trade, if any could be made, is bad and expensive. The Jidda people also dare not use it for trade as it is supposed to be the haunt of robbers, and they declare men are killed on it every year. The traders are generally Moslems. I could find no prospect of diverting the trade of this country to Gambela.

Local prices were as follows:—

Hides, 2 dollars each. Transport to Adis Ababa comes to 2 dollars more each hide, making 4 dollars expenses before placing in the Adis Ababa market. Wax is 9 dollars the frasula. There is no coffee. Mule rates to Adis Ababa are 6 dollars for 6 frasulas.

The Blue Nile Crossing.

From Jidda it was four days' journey to the banks of the Nile. This crossing is between Washid and Malil, which is marked on the map. The descent and ascent

are about equal (2,000 feet each), but on the southern side the road is a little steeper. This crossing is the most westerly ford from the south into Gojam, if reports be correct. East of it is another ford also in Ras Demisie's country at Gudru, reported easier, and east of that again a ford near the place where the Blue Nile bridge is being constructed.

Great tales had been told of the badness of the road and of the ford. But the road is nearly all ridable, and the ford, 150 yards across and waist deep on the 20th April, with a bottom of boulders, is not particularly dangerous. There are some crocodiles, which are kept off with rifles.

The ford is used from November to the middle of June. In September or October, according to season, rafts are used, the materials for which are kept near the banks.

The Blue Nile for many miles, if not for all its Abyssinian course, runs between steep hills. There is neither cultivation nor a riverain population to suffer from any rise in the water due to the opening in February of the barrage sluices, if ever constructed near Lake Tsana. If there was a considerable rise users of the ford might suffer, but a boat ferry is easily constructed should the traffic warrant it.

As a main road going north and south in Abyssinia, this route suffers from a lack of grass and water. At Washid in April there is a mud hole. At Malil nearly no water. I camped on the Nile, but it is a hot unhealthy camp, and there is no grass for animals. The best point on the southern bank at the time of year is the Allaltu River, two hours from Washid market. From there the crossing to Malil could be made in nine hours.

On the whole the difficulties of this road have been much exaggerated.

Gojam.

The Galla countries, till lately pagan, lie south of the Nile. North of it is Damot, a province of Christian Gojam. Churches, each in its grove, are everywhere. The people speak Amharic, &c., instead of Galla.

In three days reached Bure, the capital of Damot, where Mr. Baird and Mr. Walker, now consul of Gambela, have been before me.

It is a disappointingly small town. Ginz is a pleasant fertile country.

Ras Hailu, the King of Gojam, was unfortunately away, having been sent for to Dessie, Ras Mikail's capital, to meet Lij Yasu and Ras Waldo Giorgis. But I was received with every courtesy by his deputy.

Negradras Magainio, of Damot, a Tigrean, who had been to London, is a very voluble, intelligent man, who speaks Arabic. Ras Hailu's people were all nervous lest he should never return. He is on bad terms with his powerful neighbour, Ras Waldo Giorgis. The Gojam officials thought that Lij Yasu mistrusted the Shoans, and to counterbalance them was making a strong confederacy of the north. This Ras Hailu was to join or be imprisoned. It is probably true that Ras Mikail was seeking friends for his son Lij Yasu, but not enemies, such as would be made by imprisoning the King of Gojam.

Dunkur.

Gojam is of importance to the Soudan as a rich neighbour with whom trade should be encouraged. It was for this reason that Mr. Walker in 1906, and the three subsequent years, visited Bure and opened a border market at Dunkur. Dunkur, however, in now in Ras Waldo Giorgis's hands, and the trade appears to have died. In Mr. Walker's day Ras Mangarha was alive in Gojam, and Negadras Magainio was not at Bure.

Dunkur was closed by the Soudan because in four years no useful result was obtained. Soudan traders had too far to come and poor prices ruled. The coffee sold was bad, and the traders had long to wait for the Abyssinians. During the four years trade began in February and merchants returned to Singa in April. The total exports and imports never exceeded 700l. The journey from Singa to Dunkur takes twenty camel days.

Such were the reasons which induced the Soudan to close their Dunkur experiment.

Negradras Magainio was much in favour of reopening Dunkur. He declared that not only all Damot, but all the Galla countries near the Blue Nile would trade there; that it was at once healthier, nearer, and more convenient than Gallabat.

Gallabat.

He seemed hostile to Gallabat and in favour of trade with distant Asmara. He declared that the Italians did things much better than the English. They built a railway to Asmara, they had a consul at Gondar, they gave free doctoring to all the world. And Gallabat was badly managed.

If I here repeat the complaints against Gallabat, which under careful encouragement the Negadras ventilated, it must not be thought that I endorse them or attach undue weight to them. Many exaggerations could be detected, which I afterwards checked in Gondar, and no Abyssinian is overburdened with truth. I have never been to Gallabat, and I am well aware that the Damot Negadras hoped that I would give him a present to assist Gallabat trade. Therefore his instinct would be to belittle it first, so as to increase the apparent benefit of his help. He had probably received a big present from Signor Ortini. However, the inspector of Gallabat might or might not find some grain of utility in what Magainio said, and I give it for what it may be worth.

According to the Negadras, between 500 and 600 loads of merchandise go every month to Gallabat from Bure, except immediately before and during the rains. This means seven months of active trade and five months' stagnation. His first complaint was of the fever. Nearly every trader who went there had fever, and his servants could not work; many of them afterwards died. When I said I could not see how that could be the fault of the management of Gallabat, he said they might at least give merchants shelter (there were no huts) and medicine. He said that the English doctor was very rarely there, but that the other (meaning, I suppose, an Egyptian) was hard to see, and gave nothing at all till he was heavily paid. This story I heard again from Gallabat traders on Lake Tsana. His other complaints were that Abyssinians were kicked and beaten by "Shangollas," negroes whom they despise. This is probably some old story of a Soudanese policeman. Further, that there was no grass for animals which they were allowed to use, and that their mules died. That the buyers, who were Arabs or Indians, were clever enough to use the Abyssinians' difficulties. They knew that by waiting at Gallabat, the sellers were losing men and animals, and that for the fear of fever (very vivid, indeed, to any Abyssinian), they were in a desperate hurry to be gone. So the Arabs made delays, offered very bad prices—held them up, in fact, unfairly.

He said that no Abyssinian could get speech with an Englishman, because the servants drove them away.

I made some enquiries in Gondar, where the doctor's fees were reaffirmed and complaint made of the customs charges. I asked for these charges, and wrote them down as they were given me. I never heard of some of the articles mentioned or of Sheikh Sherif.

| | |
|--|---------------------------|
| On every kantar of honey | 1 dollar. |
| " " " coffee | 1 dollar. |
| Also 1 rottle to Sheikh Shereef. | |
| On every 4 tons of ghi | 1½ " |
| 4 piastres for customs receipts. | |
| Each leopard skin | 2½ piastres. |
| " " " kantar of wheat | ½ dollar. |
| " " " hilba | 1 " |
| " " " dumbalal | 6 dollars. |
| " " " score silk | 8 " |
| " " " abugedid | 2 " |
| Eight packets thread | 2 dollars and 2 piastres. |
| Each mule | 2 dollars. |
| " " " horse | 2 dollars. |
| " " " donkey | ½ dollar. |

These charges may be right by local valuations. The inspector would know.

With all their groans, Gondar traders admitted that Gallabat was growing. Moslems from Jeffu are coming to Gondar for the trade—and the Italians grumble at it.

While on the trade, I might give the customs gates between Gondar and Gallabat—no less than six: arre Waha, Kandaffa, Walda Fatari, Waled Ava, Beloha, Waheina. At each of these 1 dollar is levied on every three loads, making 2 dollars a load extra from Gondar to Gallabat.

Mule Rates.

To return to Bure, Negadras Magainio said that traders were leaving Gallabat to trade with Asmara. To try to test this I asked in the market for mule rates. To Asmara there was no quotation, as all traders had their own mules, but it was thought it would be about 25 dollars. To Durkur, no quotation. To Gallabat, 8 dollars for 6fr asulas. To Adis Ababa, 9 dollars for 6 frasulas. There are no European traders in Bure, though an occasional Arab comes.

Prices.

In Bure market abugedid, mark Allemania, from Asmara, was being sold at 5½ to 6 dollars the piece, good strong material; coffee from Lekompte was 7½ dollars the frasula; hides, 4 to 4½ dollars each; wax, 8 to 9 dollars.

In Dongola prices were the same, except coffee a little dearer. In Gondar the abugedid cost 5 dollars; coffee, 7 to 8 dollars (some from Zege on lake Tsana); hides, 4 kilog. to the dollar; wax; 8 dollars.

Mules.

Mules at Bure were few, poor, and cost 40 to 45 dollars.

A Greek or Syrian Soudan agent was buying mules at Dongola, north of Bure. He was described to me as a British officer and was, perhaps, posing as such, as he avoided me altogether when I passed through Dongola. He was giving 35 to 38 dollars for mules. These, I suppose, would be taken to Gallabat.

It would not be easy to buy many mules quickly in this country as they are much scattered, and permission to buy is hard to obtain from the Abyssinian Government. Even in Adis Ababa it is very hard to get fifty mules in a month. A fair at Gallabat might, perhaps, be possible, if there was any grazing.

Horses.

Gojam is said to be a horse country, but in the markets on my route there were very few to be seen and those poor ones. There was a certain number of mares grazing, but for the most part small and of poor quality. Breeding is too often left to chance. The mares are put alternately to horse and donkey. Good horse and donkey stallions would improve the ponies and mules. But the existing mules are better than the horses.

Dongola.

The best market for both mules and horses is Dongola in Agomedyr, about 45 miles north of Bure. Here there are three languages in use, Amharic, Tigre, and Ago, which is perfectly distinct from the other two. The country from Bure to Dongola is well cultivated.

There is a negadras in Dongola, but I did not make his acquaintance.

Slavery.

Dongola is the great slave market for northern Abyssinia, slaves from the Soudan borders and from Kaffa (Kaffichos, unlike Gallas, are still legally slaves) coming through in caravans about twice a-week. Each caravan may average fifty, for the most part women and children, who are easier to catch, drive, and teach. The sale is carried on under a sham secrecy. The price in Gondar is 80 dollars for a full-grown man or woman, and 30 dollars for a child. In Adis Ababa much less than this. The traders are Abyssinians, both Moslem and Christian.

There are apologists for domestic slavery in Africa who say that under proper safeguards it does little harm, and that without it in such poor countries there would be no industries. Also, it is said that Abyssinians are kind masters.

It is true that in certain low-lying parts of Abyssinia, where there is fever for highlanders, there are to be found negroid slave colonies, who I know live happily in their own cottages, and are not in any way ill-treated. They cultivate countries nearly uninhabitable by Abyssinians or even Gallas. It is true, also, that many

Abyssinians are kindly people, and a sudden abolition of domestic slavery presents many difficult questions.

Still, I have so often heard of horrors, of children chained for days, and flogged and outraged. I would, in a country of strong law and stronger public opinion, listen to the apologists for domestic slavery: Abyssinia has neither; the heaviest crime of slavery is in the root of it, which is slave-raiding and slave-driving. In Abyssinia there are caravans of children driven along the roads, with a few women, no housing, no clothing, and little food. When it is cold and wet, as it often is in the highlands, they die by the road-side.

Menelek adhered to the Brussels Act. The selling of slaves is nominally illegal, recruitment being only possible from prisoners of war. Any negro on the frontier is a prisoner of war at will, and practically every Abyssinian owns slaves. The chiefs own hundreds, even thousands.

I have known men punished for selling slaves in Adis Ababa, but they are given away every day for some value received.

The children of slave women are slaves, but if by a free man they can purchase freedom for, I think, 30 dollars—a great sum to a slave. Any slave may be freed and registered as free in Adis Ababa, but if he goes outside he is sure to be taken. To harbour a runaway slave or entice him from his master are grave offences, and several curious trials of such things have come to my notice.

In this journey, as in that of 1911, I passed caravans of slaves. I venture to offer these remarks, as I think it is not realised that Abyssinia is the real stronghold of slavery in Eastern and Central Africa.

Lake Tsana.

Lake Tsana's shore can be reached in about 37 miles from Dongola. My route followed it to the northern end.

Wherever I went the lake is very shallow near the land. I had no boat, but 100 yards out the water was only waist-deep. Yet in the military report the depth is given as 40 fathoms (who measured this great depth?), so it would seem that it shelves gradually to the west and north. I suppose the eastern shore is deeper.

Along the whole western shore are grassy bays between rocky promontories. The promontories are from $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 mile or more apart, and the flat margin from 40 to 100 yards deep.

The pasture on them is not good, and they are none of them under cultivation, which begins only above high-water mark. At the northern end the margin is wider, and a change in the level of the lake would cover more grazing ground.

It seemed that under M. Dupuis' scheme, if ever adopted, the slight rise in the lake level would do no appreciable harm on the west and north. Here are very few people, and for their cattle there is abundant and better pasture, at present wasted, over great areas above high-water mark.

As to cotton growing, no Italian seems to have visited this part of Dembea lately. In Gondar I was told that an Italian concession hunter, accompanied by Signor Ortini, had been to Zege in Gojam, east of the lake, to look for cotton lands; but that he encountered too many difficulties and had given up the project.

The soil on the west of the lake is black and rich-looking. But there are not enough people at present living on that side to find the necessary labour for cotton.

Boats and Coffee.

Zege, on the east of the lake, is a coffee-growing district, which grows, it is said, a slightly inferior coffee to that of Gore.

Much of the Zege coffee goes to Gallabat by boat, coasting round the south and west of the lake as far as Delfi. The boats pole, only paddling if they are driven into deep water, and never sail. They are made of ambatch, and are more rafts than boats. The coffee is done up in skins, and in case of a storm is jettisoned, the men relying on the unsinkable ambatch to float them. The voyage, depending on the wind, takes from six to fourteen days. The return import is abagedid, carried as is the coffee by donkeys (150-lb. load) along the eleven days road from Gallabat to Delgi.

Three enterprising Greeks from the Soudan were returning from Zege with four boat-loads of coffee. They had been twelve days on the voyage. The boats pay 1 dollar tax at Zege, and the charge is from 10 to 12 dollars in the less windy months

of November and December to the present price of 22 dollars. Each boat or raft carries eighty Abyssinian kantars.

The Greeks told me that there is not enough coffee in Zege to pay for a sailing boat. But in the future, perhaps, cotton or rubber can be grown round Lake Tsana.

Between Delfi and Gallabat are three custom-houses, where the total charges amount to 1 dollar per donkey load.

Native feeling about the Lake.

On islands in Lake Tsana, the most of which are yet unvisited by white men, are buried the ancient kings of Gondar, in churches and abbeys. This seems to increase a real feeling among the Amhara of some peculiar affection for the great lake. In Gondar it is said that the foreigners wish to take Lake Tsana, and that, when they do, Amhara is lost. The tour of M. Dupuis and party is well remembered, and lately Signor Ortini, the Italian agent, has visited Zege and some of the islands. His liberality has made him popular, but the feeling about the lake remains, and would be some obstacle to any scheme of a barrage in the future.

As to the Italian offer to the Abyssinian Government to construct the barrage, I heard nothing of it locally, though it is likely that Ras Waldo Giorgis has been informed of it.

Dembea.

Dembea was once a rich province, "the abode of saints," and full of churches. Places are still known as the forty churches, the ten churches, and so on. But then came the Emir Abu Anjat (still remembered as Banja), the bloody battle of Sarre Waha at the north end of the lake, and the burning of Gondar. At Sarre Waha King Tekla Haimamot of Gojam was overwhelmed, and thousands of his people were driven into the water, where the dervishes used them as targets. Fire and sword have levelled every village and nearly every church.

The great castle at Gondar was burnt by the dervishes, and not as is sometimes said by Theodore.

The dervish ruled in Dembea for a year, and after him came famine; after the famine, drought; and after drought, locusts.

An old priest, who blessed the English as conquerors of the dervish, told me that the country was still in the dust. There were neither men nor money in it. But it is a rich country, with a good climate, unsurpassed as far as I know Abyssinia, and time will restore it.

Gondar.

Gondar, "the home of the learned," a delight to painter and archaeologist, is a most disappointing town to a commercial traveller, such as I was.

There are barely 3,000 people in it, ancient capital as it is. The market is poor, the water is scanty and bad, and there is little prospect of trade. The town has a Falacha (Jewish) quarter, where can be found workers in wood and builders. The Moslem quarter towards Gallabat is constantly growing. The old sheikh told me that Islam was strong, and that men came continually there from Yejja, Ras Mikail's country.

The Italian Agency.

This agency is described to us as a commercial agency. Signor Ortini, the agent, is officially a commercial agent, which title to an Englishman is apt to depict some small agent to help traders, through the customs, and who is allowed to trade himself.

Signor Ortini is an ex-deputy for Rome, and has the grade of first class political agent of the colony of Erythrea. His house is called the agency by its holders, while the interpreters speak of it as the legation. By Abyssinian ideas considerable state is kept up, eight or ten armed men being always at the door, and soldiers escorting the agent if he goes abroad. The agency owns ninety mules and attendants for them, and spends a great deal of money. There is a free dispensary treating about 1,000 patients a-month. This is most gratefully received, and is a powerful political asset. As an Italian agent said to me, "With money and medicine one can do anything in Abyssinia." Ras Waldo Giorgis had received a flour-mill and "a cannon" (probably a machine gun). Signor Ortini holds as a gift what was

described as "a whole toll" at Dumgeas, five hours from Gondar, Ras Waldo Giorgis's summer capital, two hours from Lake Tsana. He has also land and a house at Dubarek on the Adua road, and has leased land in Gondar. He tried to buy in Gondar, but so far has not succeeded.

These facts, I think, show that an Italian commercial agent, though no doubt correctly so named to an Italian, is better described in English as political officer or consul.

Signor Cavaliere Teodorani at Adua is of the same grade, but senior to Signor Ortini. The new Italian commercial agent in Southern Abyssinia is a naval officer.

Signor Ortini, to my great regret, was absent on sick leave, but his deputy, Dr. Beiracaqua, received me with the greatest kindness. I owe him much gratitude, as he took in to his house my unlucky interpreter, whose leg was broken in Gondar by the kick of a mule.

Ras Waldo Giorgis.

Signor Ortini is very powerful and popular with Ras Waldo Giorgis. When the ras, at the time of the tension at Dessie, was likely to be at variance with Lij Yasu, it was reported informally that the Italians would prevent Ras Waldo Giorgis from suffering wrong. This ras might be the most weighty claimant to the throne, as he is of the blood royal and rules an immense country. Unfortunately I could not see him on account of his visit to Dessie.

Various small occurrences, and the general attitude of all his chiefs, combined with the recent claim of the ras to Girra, which is some 20 miles in the Soudan, lead me to think that he is not at present friendly to England. Conceivably we might be represented as aggressive neighbours, against whom the ras would require some counterbalance. Such counterbalance must of course be paid for in concessions and aids to trade. This is pure conjecture. The only fact is that the ras seems to be unfriendly now; whereas, when he was on the Uganda border, he was noticeably friendly.

The Agordat Road.

The Italians have made a camel road to Gondar, passing through Agordat and Chelga, not far from the Soudan frontier. This road escapes the Malomo Pass and the mountain crossing of the Tacazze River. It is rather longer than the mule track, and rather short of water for part of the year, but always passable.

The Asmara-Keren-Agordat Railway is being pushed forward. Its arrival at Agordat must modify conditions in Gondar, and tend to subtract all the Soudan trade; for at Gallabat there is an 8 per cent. duty, while on the Italian border there is none at all.

Consular Appointment.

The Italian claim to commercial concessions and reversionary interests in Dembea and Gondar is very much strengthened by Signor Ortini's skill and by the hope of the Agordat Railway.

Should the Foreign Office or the Soudan consider that for the future feeding of the Gedaref Railway, Lake Tsana barrage, trade, and the possibilities, however distant, of a forced partition of Abyssinia, it is necessary to devote more attention to this corner, the best way is certainly to appoint an officer at Gondar with a position similar to Signor Ortini's and to that of Mr. Walker in Western Abyssinia. An adequate allowance is absolutely necessary. The announcement of the Gedaref line and of such a consular appointment would be of much use politically; and it might be hoped that the increase of trade would, as in the case of Mr. Walker, more than pay for the appointment.

Italian aids to Trade.

I found that in Gondar trade with Asmara is more popular than that in the Gallabat. The reasons, as far as I know them, which outweigh the greater distance and the worse road, are not simply a matter of local prices, but, first, the absence of any frontier customs, next a system of passes for servants, which I will explain; and last, the constant presents of Signor Ortini to traders. The last appears to me an unsound policy bound to fail by itself, but for the time it is certainly effective. The first is regretted by many Italians who wish to reduce the deficit on the Erythrean budget, and only justified by the general ambition of the colony, which I will go into later.

Passes for Servants.

The system of passes has been invented by the agents at Gondar and Adua, and works well. It is rendered necessary by the fact that all traders, or nearly all, man their caravans with slaves. If they paid men, as is done on the Adis Ababa roads to a great extent, the distances and rates would eat up their profits. But it was found that in free countries such as the Soudan and Erythrea, slaves once across the frontier deserted, leaving the caravan crippled. The Italians do not give back any declared slave, but a merchant on leaving Gondar receives a paper from the agency giving the number of his servants, animals, arms, merchandise, &c. This paper he takes to Asmara and is allowed to bring out of Erythrea the same number of men and arms and animals as he took in. If any of his so-called servants are missing, the Italian authorities will find and hand them over.

Coupled with these advantages to Erythrea are the complaints against Gallabat, which I have already set out. I am not able to compare prices thoroughly, as I have never been to Gallabat, but road dues and transport are against Asmara.

Road Dues.

Road dues to Gallabat already given amount to 2 dollars a mule load. To Asmara they seem to be as follows: I say "seem," because traders become confused between taxes and baksheesh, and often contradict themselves. But the average of statement is as follows:—

Gondar to Asmara: for each four loads at Gondar gate 1 dollar, at Dubarek 1 dollar, at Maiteklat 1 dollar. Then alternatively at Dunkoto or Adua, on each load of coffee 3 dollars, on each load of skins 1 dollar, on each load of spices 1 dollar, and wax 4 dollars. Besides these there are grazing charges of from 2 to 3 dollars, depending on the size of the caravan, at six places on the road.

On the return journey, a merchant pays 3 dollars per load at Adua, and 4 dollars on arrival at Gondar, besides the grazing charges, and every kella $\frac{1}{2}$ dollar a load as baksheesh. Everybody bribes these licensed robbers with money, as well as goods in kind, glasses, silks, and the like.

On the Gallabat roads the same system doubtless obtains. Every village chief will demand something. But the distance is less than half. Even with the 8 per cent. export tax, Gallabat should have little to fear if economic were the only considerations.

Attitude of Officials.

It may be useful to travellers to say something of the attitude of officials.

I left Adis Ababa with what I believe to have been the most complete and favourable letters ever given. Besides the usual Government pass, without which there is no travelling in Abyssinia, there were letters from Lij Yasu to every important chief, including Ras Waldo Giorgis. In all other countries but this Ras's, I was received with every courtesy and mark of honour. But Ras Waldo Giorgis was absent, and could only be visited at the expense of more time than I could afford. I had, indeed, a letter to him, but had never presented it, and accordingly had not his seal to show to the chiefs under him.

The tension between Ras Waldo Giorgis, Ras Hailu, Ras Mikail, and Lij Yasu was then at its height. Ras Waldo Giorgis's chiefs did not know if he was friend or enemy to Lij Yasu. They probably thought on account of his claim to wider territory that he was unfriendly to the English. Then arrived unheralded an English consul travelling on Lij Yasu's letter. They would not know whether it would be better to help or hinder me.

There were many small cases of difficulties for the mules at Kellas, culminating with a certain Negadras Berret, of Dubarek. This negadras paid me a visit and asked for my papers. His voluble secretary, on seeing Lij Yasu's seal (that of the Empire of Ethiopia), said that Lij Yasu was nobody, and that I could not pass until they had heard from the Ras—a matter of ten days. I said that England had recognised Lij Yasu as heir to Menelek, with whom we had always been friendly, that nobody should sit in my tent and say that he was of no importance. We parted, they on their side saying that they would prevent my leaving by force. It was evening, raining and cold, and they did prevent my buying wood and food. The next morning, while tents were coming down, they sent me word by a slave that there would be serious trouble

if I persisted. But when the caravan began to move, the keeper of the customs said he could not quarrel with important people, and that no one should touch me.

The negadras's conduct was prompted partly by desire to extort a present, partly by fear that he might be blamed for not annoying me.

I mention this case as the only one in my eight months of travel, in which a responsible official such as a negadras gave me any personal rudeness or failed in the usual courtesies.

Polliteness is an Abyssinian virtue and ceremony is always observed. Such a thing would never have happened, if I had been able to call on Ras Waldo Giorgis. All travellers should make a point of visiting the great chiefs.

The Road to Adua.

From Gondar to Adua is about eighteen days. The road, as far as the northern bank of the Tacazze, is up and down mountains. The Malomo Pass, north of Dubarek, is the worst place in my lengthened experience for transport animals. The Tacazze River involved a ten hours' night march. There was little grass for mules anywhere, not much water, little food for men, long hours, steep and stony roads—a most expensive trade route.

Cotton Goods Trade.

In Gondar first, and afterwards on the road, I met an Armenian merchant who had been in Adana at the time of the massacres. He belongs to the Massowah branch of a Milan firm of cotton goods merchants (Dilsizian Frères) who have branches also at Khartoum, Gadaref, and Gallabat. The cotton stuffs are all Italian.

At Asmara and Massowah combined his sales came to 4,000 to 5,000 bales a-year, and at Adiquala (the Erythrean frontier) 2,500 to 3,000. Much of the Adiquala sales are for Gondar, and for this reason Signor Ortini had suggested a visit to Gondar to open a branch.

M. Dilsizian was returning from Gondar having come from Khartoum via Gedaref (where the sales amount to 600 bales a-year), and Gallabat (where he sells only 250 bales).

His Odyssey may be of interest to Soudan traders. On arrival at Chelga he was detained eight days till he should receive a letter from the ras. He was several weeks in Gondar, but was never allowed to open a shop, because Ras Waldo Giorgis said he must first have Menelek's permission. It is interesting, as showing the limits of the influence of the Italian agency, to find that he was specially invited by them and strongly backed throughout. When he asked to leave Gondar, Fit Melket, the governor, said he must wait till Ras Waldo Giorgis's pleasure was known, which meant another week's delay. He only got away as the result of direct pressure by the Italian agent.

This is M. Dilsizian's first visit to Abyssinia, and will be his last. As a new-comer he probably did not understand that traders are expected to grease the wheels, or perhaps, as an Armenian, he refused.

Ascum.

After the Tacazze River, Tigre begins—a fertile province. Ascum, famous for its history and antiquities, is a rising little town commercially, as big as Gondar, with a bigger market. At Ascum I was shown the German Emperor's present, given to help on the labours of the archaeologists. But Dejaz Gabri Selassi, who took me round, told me that the people of Ascum were furious at the digging among the ruins, and that the archaeologists, to his regret, had been obliged to leave the matter unfinished.

Adua.

The capital of Tigre is Adua, where are the cross roads from Asmara, Dessie, and Gondar.

Signor Cavaliere Teodorani.

The Italians maintain another so-called commercial agency here, kept by Cavaliere Teodorani, to whom I am indebted for much kindness. His establishment is similar to that of Signor Ortini's, except that he has no dispensary, but hopes to obtain one. He has seventeen years' experience of Erythrea, and can see little hope of expansion of the Gondar trade from that side, but holds that it would soon be

developed from Agordat. With Jeju and Macalle trade was increasing, and from Dessie to Assab. He is an advocate for a railway from Asmara to Adua, the line presenting few natural difficulties.

Dejaz Gabri Selassi.

Dejaz Gabri Selassi, Governor of Tigre, was educated at Massowah, and talks Italian. He was a Fitaurari in the Italian native levies at the battle of Adua, but is now a rising chief, and married to a half-sister of Lij Yasu.

He told me of the system of inoculation against cattle disease which he has introduced in the Tigre, and which might be useful to East Africa. It appears that in Asmara there is a bacteriological institute where has been discovered or prepared some serum. With this all cattle in Tigre are inoculated at a charge of 1 dollar per head. The percentage of loss is only 3 or 4 per 1,000, and it is said that both cure and prevention are perfect, except for this percentage.

The Erythrean Frontier.

After Adua the track is easy to the Mareb River (dry in June), which forms the frontier between Abyssinia and Erythrea. From there the first frontier post is at Adiquala, now in charge of a native Dejazmatch. From here the carriage-road runs to Adiogri, 31 kilom. to Asmara, 60 kilom. further.

At Adiogri I was received with the invariable kindness of Italian officers by Signor Pollera, commissario regionale. He introduced me to the officers of the 1st battalion of Erythrean askaris, and of those of the cavalry squadron.

Adiquala and Adiogri are not inviting places to look at, but Adiogri is being improved. The road is excellent. The country is a high stony plateau, now much burnt up and without trees.

Cavalry.

The Erythrean cavalry consists of one squadron only. The country, being either stony or black cotton soil, is unsuited to cavalry. I had the pleasure of seeing the stables, &c., which are beautifully kept, the men smart and the horses the best Abyssinian horses I have seen. They all came from the Wollo Galla country, and cost on an average 70 dollars each, including road expenses. The men are armed with lance, sword, rifle, and revolver, and wear khaki uniform.

Infantry.

The 1st battalion was waiting to relieve another battalion now in Tripoli, the roster of active service in their case being only a very short one, partly to keep the men from being home-sick and partly to let them all see service. They are to a man keen to go; many of the cavalry squadron who are not under orders having by permission re-enlisted in the infantry to see the fighting. Their officers describe them as good troops, but too keen and apt to repeat the fault of Adua, and get out of hand in attack. The infantry are nearly all Tigrean and Hamasen, but some are Soudanese.

There are no native officers now, no native rising above non-commissioned officer. This was found necessary, as when native officers were tried they had no authority. A corollary is the presence of a larger number of white officers than we are accustomed to see with native troops, which must strengthen their morale.

There are four battalions of these Erythrean troops now in the country, and I think four in Tripoli.

The pay is very good, a private soldier receiving 1 fr. a-day, which is doubled while he is in Tripoli, half being paid to his family. Non-commissioned officers receive 4 fr. 50 c. a-day, or 9 fr. in Tripoli. If a man is killed his widow receives 250 fr. gratuity.

A soldier can leave the army when he will and re-enlist when he will. There is no age limit. Annual manœuvres are held.

Artillery.

I had no opportunity of seeing artillery, but heard that the gunners were Soudanese, and the gun the Italian mountain gun.

In general the Erythrean soldier is smart, well drilled, and very keen.

Transport.

A large number of ponies and mules, with drivers, are kept in use by service on the roads. The carts and carriages are well horsed, and the stations well cared for.

Militia.

I made the acquaintance of the commandant and the staff at Asmara. They told me of the militia, in which practically every able-bodied Erythrean serves. It is called out for training every two years. I was assured that they were keen and intelligent, but like all Abyssinians too excitable and hard to hold in attack. They are said to shoot fairly, which somewhat surprises me, after experience of Abyssinians.

Asmara.

From Adiogri to Asmara the roads, already excellent for carriages, is being further aligned and graded for commercial motors.

Motor Services.

Motor services are in use from Asmara to Keren, and from Asmara to Adikaia, near Adigrat. It is too early yet to say if they will pay.

Town and Climate.

Asmara is a regularly laid-out township, with streets, shops, a palace for the governor, a fort and barracks, Government offices, railway station, churches, &c.

The elevation is about the same as Adis Ababa, and the same complaints are made of the seemingly pleasant climate, namely, that it causes nervousness and sleeplessness.

Colonists.

In Erythrea there are very few Italian colonists, and no new colonists arrive. Those existing have usually done well, and hold large farms. Immigration from Italy to Erythrea was checked by the battle of Adua, after which the country was described as hell. But colonists are not now invited or encouraged in any way. There is no land to give them, and their advent makes difficulties with the natives, which the Italians are most unwilling to incur.

Agriculture.

Between Adiogri and Asmara the country looks richer and less stony. It is said that it is over-cultivated. There is little manure or rotation of crops, and not enough land to allow of long fallows.

Native Immigration.

Although the average immigration per annum of Tigreans and others into Erythrea to work on the railways or for harvest amounts to 12,000, very few of these remain after they have made a little money.

The Italian Government is justly popular, and there are no taxes. But there is no land to take up, and the few Italian colonists have a bad name as employers. They are said to promise 1 fr. a-day wages and then to make excuse to pay only half of it.

Even half a franc is fair pay in Adis Ababa.

There are various schools and missions which do much good, and send educated Abyssinians in many directions.

Revenue.

The revenue of Erythrea is derived from the Massowah customs and from the very low poll tax of 2 fr. on men only. There are no dues on the land frontiers on trade to and from Abyssinia.

The total receipts are about 4,000,000 lire.

The expenditure of the colony apart from the railway is about 7,000,000 lire, which leaves an annual subvention of 150,000l. to come from Italy.

Railways.

Italy built and paid for the Massowah-Asmara railway, 175 kilom., 1 metre gauge. It has a rise of about 7,000 feet in about half that distance, thirty-eight tunnels, various stations and sidings. It is beautifully engineered, but must have been very expensive to build, and must be expensive to maintain, both as to track and rolling-stock.

There is one train a-day, alternately passenger and goods.

The line Asmara to Keren and Agordat now under construction will be much cheaper to build, but will have less to carry. I was told (but cannot say if it is correct) that the line will be in Agordat in two years.

General Politics of Asmara.

After talking with many Italians the impression left was that Erythrea for itself alone would never be worth the money which is spent on it. The whole object of the occupation, the whole purpose of the executive, is to extend southward over Tigre at the least. Adua and Macalle are openly regarded as practically Italian protectorates, and Dessie and Gondar as natural reversions. It might be said with some truth that the day of the division of Abyssinia is constantly in the mind of every Italian official. Adua is not forgotten, nor Antonelli's abortive treaty.

It is just this attitude of mind that gives cause to reflect. It would seem to our interest, if we wish to avoid further distant and difficult administrations, to maintain an undivided Abyssinia so long as she refrains from forcing us to act. Reform and trade will gradually grow as they have always grown in the history of the world. The Italians wish division. There is then a fundamental difference between the Italian view and ours. I have not forgotten the Tripartite Agreement, and equally not the occupation of Tripoli. The latter is doubtless some guarantee of delay against any movement in Abyssinia.

As to the occupation of Gondar by Italy, is it likely that we can welcome it? What can the Italians give for which would compensate us for the loss of control of the Blue Nile water and the sanatorium of the Soudan?

As to trade, they penalise us, for Italian imports by Massowah pay 1 per cent.; the rest of the world pay 8 per cent.

Massowah.

Massowah compared to Jibuti is a good mercantile harbour. Ships, it is true, do not lie alongside, but still are close to the business quays. The harbour is land-locked and has two sides for work: one of merchants, one of the wireless telegraphy, salt factory, &c. The third side is taken up by the governor's palace.

Import dues have been already stated; export pays 1 per cent. all round. Massowah is as much an Arab port as any in the Red Sea and there are no Abyssinians in it. It has a considerable trade connection with Aden by the weekly steamer to and fro, which steamer receives 1,200 fr. a-day as subsidy, or so I was assured, though the sum seems to me too large. There are also direct ships for Catania and Venice.

By the returns Massowah trade nearly equals that of Jibuti.

Arms.

The import and sale of arms in Erythrea is under stringent regulations. A personal permit from the governor is necessary. The system of passes for traders from Abyssinia controls the arms carried to and from Erythrea.

However, there is unavoidable contraband. A Wetterly rifle can be bought in Asmara for about 10 francs. In Adua, across the frontier, it is worth 18 to 20 dollars. A cartridge in Asmara is worth 10 centimes, in Adua six are sold to the dollar—a profit of 300 per cent.

This very difference in price points to the stringency and success in general of the Italian control of arms.

Liquors.

Liquor is also well controlled—no native in Erythrea is allowed to buy at all. Liquors for Abyssinia go through in transit under customs seal, which has to be

I have not
much faith
in the re-
surrection of
Abyssinia
H. J. R.

verified by the frontier agent. A deposit must be paid at the port of entry, to be forfeited if necessary. This is an effective system, if the deposit is large enough.

Assab.

Assab is in the Danakil country, east of Dessie, Ras Mikail's capital. At present it is only a roadstead, approached through roadbanks, from the north only, and unlighted and unbuoyed. There is, however, room and water enough close to the beach, and according to the Italian post-boat captain, it would not be very expensive to construct a harbour.

The town is of the usual Arab pattern, with a house for the Italian commissioner, a fort, a Catholic mission, a house for the shipping agent, and a tumble-down jetty for dhows. Seen from the sea, it appears a more considerable town than Berbera, but as there is no harbour, a very heavy sea runs in the monsoon. A conspicuous mark in the town is an obelisk erected to the memory of a naval officer and a commissioner, who were killed here by Danakil many years ago.

The post-boat calls here twice a-week. When I was there, she landed about 100 packages, and took none. As she is the only vessel using Assab regularly, her cargo would be a good guide to the Assab trade, and much of it at any rate goes to Aden.

The place is bad to live in. Water is said to be 5 miles away. We carried water from Massowah for the garrison, which consists of a commissioner, a chief of the customs, three military officers, and fifty askaris from Erythrea. The customs are the same as at Massowah.

Assab exports are hides, coffee, wax, and dates. The trade is growing so well that the Bank of Abyssinia has opened a branch in Dessie. The road from Assab to Dessie is unknown to Europeans and reported dangerous for them.

Before the Turco-Italian war, I was told dhows sailed every day from Assab for Mocha and Hodëidah. This may have been, perhaps, the contraband trade in slaves and arms.

Raheita.

Raheita, which we did not visit, is 30 miles to the southward, near the French frontier. It is said to be a better harbour than Assab, but to be equally badly off for water. So was Berbera in old times. There is a Sultan of Raheita, but not an Italian commissioner. The commissioner of Assab is anxious to be allowed to occupy Raheita.

The importance of these desolate places is entirely in the future, if anywhere. They may be developed by Italy, or leased, as it has been rumoured, to Germany either directly, or by recession to Abyssinia. In this case they might be points of departure for a railway which, among other things, would be an unwelcome rival to the French line from Jibuti. From Assab to Shoa the line would tap the well-watered Aussa country and would have great advantages over the desert country between Jibuti and the Hawash.

C. H. M. DOUGHTY WYLIE.