

Richard Burton

First footsteps in East Africa

Chapter 8

TEN DAYS AT HARAR.

After waiting half an hour at the gate, we were told by the returned warder to pass the threshold, and remounting guided our mules along the main street, a narrow up-hill lane, with rocks cropping out from a surface more irregular than a Perote pavement. Long Guled had given his animal into the hands of our two Bedouins: they did not appear till after our audience, when they informed us that the people at the entrance had advised them to escape with the beasts, an evil fate having been prepared for the proprietors.

Arrived within a hundred yards of the gate of holcus-stalks, which opens into the courtyard of this African St. James, our guide, a blear-eyed, surly-faced, angry-voiced fellow, made signs — none of us understanding his Harari — to dismount. We did so. He then began to trot, and roared out apparently that we must do the same.¹ We looked at one another, the Hammal swore that he would perish foully rather than obey, and — conceive, dear L., the idea of a petticoated pilgrim venerable as to beard and turban breaking into a long “double!”— I expressed much the same sentiment. Leading our mules leisurely, in spite of the guide’s wrath, we entered the gate, strode down the yard, and were placed under a tree in its left corner, close to a low building of rough stone, which the clanking of frequent fetters argued to be a state-prison.

This part of the court was crowded with Gallas, some lounging about, others squatting in the shade under the palace walls. The chiefs were known by their zinc armlets, composed of thin spiral circlets, closely joined, and extending in mass from the wrist almost to the elbow: all appeared to enjoy peculiar privileges,— they carried their long spears, wore their sandals, and walked leisurely about the royal precincts. A delay of half an hour, during which state-affairs were being transacted within, gave me time to inspect a place of which so many and such different accounts are current. The palace itself is, as Clapperton describes the Fellatah Sultan’s state-hall, a mere shed, a long, single-storied, windowless barn of rough stone and reddish clay, with no other insignia but a

thin coat of whitewash over the door. This is the royal and vizierial distinction at Harar, where no lesser man may stucco the walls of his house. The courtyard was about eighty yards long by thirty in breadth, irregularly shaped, and surrounded by low buildings: in the centre, opposite the outer entrance, was a circle of masonry against which were propped divers doors.²

Presently the bleary-eyed guide with the angry voice returned from within, released us from the importunities of certain forward and inquisitive youth, and motioned us to doff our slippers at a stone step, or rather line, about twelve feet distant from the palace-wall. We grumbled that we were not entering a mosque, but in vain. Then ensued a long dispute, in tongues mutually unintelligible, about giving up our weapons: by dint of obstinacy we retained our daggers and my revolver. The guide raised a door curtain, suggested a bow, and I stood in the presence of the dreaded chief.

The Amir, or, as he styles himself, the Sultan Ahmad bin Sultan Abibakr, sat in a dark room with whitewashed walls, to which hung — significant decorations — rusty matchlocks and polished fetters. His appearance was that of a little Indian Rajah, an etiolated youth twenty-four or twenty-five years old, plain and thin-bearded, with a yellow complexion, wrinkled brows and protruding eyes. His dress was a flowing robe of crimson cloth, edged with snowy fur, and a narrow white turban tightly twisted round a tall conical cap of red velvet, like the old Turkish headgear of our painters. His throne was a common Indian Kursi, or raised cot, about five feet long, with back and sides supported by a dwarf railing: being an invalid he rested his elbow upon a pillow, under which appeared the hilt of a Cutch sabre. Ranged in double line, perpendicular to the Amir, stood the “court,” his cousins and nearest relations, with right arms bared after fashion of Abyssinia.

I entered the room with a loud “Peace be upon ye!” to which H. H. replying graciously, and extending a hand, bony and yellow as a kite’s claw, snapped his thumb and middle finger. Two chamberlains stepping forward, held my forearms, and assisted me to bend low over the fingers, which however I did not kiss, being naturally averse to performing that operation upon any but a woman’s hand. My two servants then took their turn: in this case, after the back was saluted, the palm was presented for a repetition.³ These preliminaries concluded, we were led

to and seated upon a mat in front of the Amir, who directed towards us a frowning brow and an inquisitive eye.

Some inquiries were made about the chief's health: he shook his head captiously, and inquired our errand. I drew from my pocket my own letter: it was carried by a chamberlain, with hands veiled in his Tobe, to the Amir, who after a brief glance laid it upon the couch, and demanded further explanation. I then represented in Arabic that we had come from Aden, bearing the compliments of our Daulah or governor, and that we had entered Harar to see the light of H. H.'s countenance: this information concluded with a little speech, describing the changes of Political Agents in Arabia, and alluding to the friendship formerly existing between the English and the deceased chief Abubakr.

The Amir smiled graciously.

This smile I must own, dear L., was a relief. We had been prepared for the worst, and the aspect of affairs in the palace was by no means reassuring.

Whispering to his Treasurer, a little ugly man with a badly shaven head, coarse features, pug nose, angry eyes, and stubby beard, the Amir made a sign for us to retire. The *baise main* was repeated, and we backed out of the audience-shed in high favour. According to grandiloquent Bruce, "the Court of London and that of Abyssinia are, in their principles, one:" the loiterers in the Harar palace yard, who had before regarded us with cut-throat looks, now smiled as though they loved us. Marshalled by the guard, we issued from the precincts, and after walking a hundred yards entered the Amir's second palace, which we were told to consider our home. There we found the Bedouins, who, scarcely believing that we had escaped alive, grinned in the joy of their hearts, and we were at once provided from the chief's kitchen with a dish of Shabta, holcus cakes soaked in sour milk, and thickly powdered with red pepper, the salt of this inland region.

When we had eaten, the treasurer reappeared, bearing the Amir's command, that we should call upon his Wazir, the Gerad Mohammed. Resuming our peregrinations, we entered an abode distinguished by its external streak of chunam, and in a small room on the ground floor, cleanly white-washed and adorned, like an old English kitchen, with varnished wooden porringers of various sizes, we found a venerable old man whose benevolent countenance belied the reports current about him in Somali-land.⁴ Half rising, although his wrinkled brow showed suffering, he seated me by his side upon the carpeted

masonry-bench, where lay the implements of his craft, reeds, inkstands and whitewashed boards for paper, politely welcomed me, and gravely stroking his cotton-coloured beard, desired my object in good Arabic.

I replied almost in the words used to the Amir, adding however some details how in the old day one Madar Farih had been charged by the late Sultan Abubakr with a present to the governor of Aden, and that it was the wish of our people to reestablish friendly relations and commercial intercourse with Harar.

“Khayr inshallah!— it is well if Allah please!” ejaculated the Gerad: I then bent over his hand, and took leave.

Returning we inquired anxiously of the treasurer about my servants’ arms which had not been returned, and were assured that they had been placed in the safest of store-houses, the palace. I then sent a common six-barrelled revolver as a present to the Amir, explaining its use to the bearer, and we prepared to make ourselves as comfortable as possible. The interior of our new house was a clean room, with plain walls, and a floor of tamped earth; opposite the entrance were two broad steps of masonry, raised about two feet, and a yard above the ground, and covered with, hard matting. I contrived to make upon the higher ledge a bed with the cushions which my companions used as shabracques, and, after seeing the mules fed and tethered, lay down to rest worn out by fatigue and profoundly impressed with the *poesie* of our position. I was under the roof of a bigoted prince whose least word was death; amongst a people who detest foreigners; the only European that had ever passed over their inhospitable threshold, and the fated instrument of their future downfall.

I now proceed to a description of unknown Harar.

The ancient capital of Hadiyah, called by the citizens “Harar Gay,”⁵ by the Somal “Adari,” by the Gallas “Adaray” and by the Arabs and ourselves “Harar,”⁶ lies, according to my dead reckoning, 220° S.W. of, and 175 statute miles from, Zayla — 257° W. of, and 219 miles distant from, Berberah. This would place it in 9° 20’ N. lat. and 42° 17’ E. long. The thermometer showed an altitude of about 5,500 feet above the level of the sea.⁷ Its site is the slope of an hill which falls gently from west to east. On the eastern side are cultivated fields; westwards a terraced ridge is laid out in orchards; northwards is a detached eminence covered with tombs; and to the south, the city declines into a low valley bisected by a mountain

burn. This irregular position is well sheltered from high winds, especially on the northern side, by the range of which Kondura is the lofty apex; hence, as the Persian poet sings of a heaven-favoured city,—

“Its heat is not hot, nor its cold, cold.”

During my short residence the air reminded me of Tuscany. On the afternoon of the 11th January there was thunder accompanied by rain: frequent showers fell on the 12th, and the morning of the 13th was clear; but, as we crossed the mountains, black clouds obscured the heavens. The monsoon is heavy during one summer month; before it begins the crops are planted, and they are reaped in December and January. At other seasons the air is dry, mild, and equable.

The province of Hadiyah is mentioned by Makrizi as one of the seven members of the Zayla Empire⁸, founded by Arab invaders, who in the 7th century of our aera conquered and colonised the low tract between the Red Sea and the Highlands. Moslem Harar exercised a pernicious influence upon the fortunes of Christian Abyssinia.⁹

The allegiance claimed by the AEthiopian Emperors from the Adel — the Dankali and ancient Somal — was evaded at a remote period, and the intractable Moslems were propitiated with rich presents, when they thought proper to visit the Christian court. The Abyssinians supplied the Adel with slaves, the latter returned the value in rock-salt, commercial intercourse united their interests, and from war resulted injury to both people. Nevertheless the fanatic lowlanders, propense to pillage and proselytizing, burned the Christian churches, massacred the infidels, and tortured the priests, until they provoked a blood feud of uncommon asperity.

In the 14th century (A.D. 1312-1342) Amda Sion, Emperor of AEthiopia, taunted by Amano, King of Hadiyah, as a monarch fit only to take care of women, overran and plundered the Lowlands from Tegulet to the Red Sea. The Amharas were commanded to spare nothing that drew the breath of life: to fulfil a prophecy which foretold the fall of El Islam, they perpetrated every kind of enormity.

Peace followed the death of Amda Sion. In the reign of Zara Yakub¹⁰ (A.D. 1434-1468), the flame of war was again fanned in Hadiyah by a Zayla princess who was slighted by the AEthiopian monarch on account of the length of her fore-teeth:

the hostilities which ensued were not, however, of an important nature. Boeda Mariana, the next occupant of the throne, passed his life in a constant struggle for supremacy over the Adel: on his death-bed he caused himself to be so placed that his face looked towards those lowlands, upon whose subjugation the energies of ten years had been vainly expended.

At the close of the 15th century, Mahfuz, a bigoted Moslem, inflicted a deadly blow upon Abyssinia. Vowing that he would annually spend the forty days of Lent amongst his infidel neighbours, when, weakened by rigorous fasts, they were less capable of bearing arms, for thirty successive years he burned churches and monasteries, slew without mercy every male that fell in his way, and driving off the women and children, he sold some to strange slavers, and presented others to the Sherifs of Mecca. He bought over Za Salasah, commander in chief of the Emperor's body guard, and caused the assassination of Alexander (A.D. 1478-1495) at the ancient capital Tegulet. Naud, the successor, obtained some transient advantages over the Moslems. During the earlier reign of the next emperor, David III. son of Naud ¹¹, who being but eleven years old when called to the throne, was placed under the guardianship of his mother the Iteghe Helena, new combatants and new instruments of warfare appeared on both sides in the field.

After the conquest of Egypt and Arabia by Selim I. (A. D. 1516) ¹² the caravans of Abyssinian pilgrims travelling to Jerusalem were attacked, the old were butchered and the young were swept into slavery. Many Arabian merchants fled from Turkish violence and injustice, to the opposite coast of Africa, whereupon the Ottomans took possession from Aden of Zayla, and not only laid the Indian trade under heavy contributions by means of their war-galleys, but threatened the total destruction of Abyssinia. They aided and encouraged Mahfuz to continue his depredations, whilst the Sherif of Meccah gave him command of Zayla, the key of the upper country, and presented him with the green banner of a Crusader.

On the other hand, the great Albuquerque at the same time (A.D. 1508-1515) was viceroy of India, and to him the Iteghe Helena applied for aid. Her ambassador arrived at Goa, "bearing a fragment of wood belonging to the true cross on which Christ died," which relic had been sent as a token of friendship to her brother Emanuel by the empress of Aethiopia. The overture was followed by the arrival at Masawwah of an embassy from the king of Portugal. Too proud, however, to

await foreign aid, David at the age of sixteen took the field in person against the Moslems.

During the battle that ensued, Mahfuz, the Goliath of the Unbelievers, was slain in single combat by Gabriel Andreas, a soldier of tried valour, who had assumed the monastic life in consequence of having lost the tip of his tongue for treasonable freedom of speech: the green standard was captured, and 12,000 Moslems fell. David followed up his success by invading the lowlands, and, in defiance, struck his spear through the door of the king of Adel.

Harar was a mere mass of Bedouin villages during the reign of Mohammed Gragne, the "left-handed" Attila of Adel.¹³ Supplied with Arab mercenaries from Mocha, and by the Turks of Yemen with a body of Janissaries and a train of artillery, he burst into Efat and Fatigar. In A.D. 1528 he took possession of Shoa, overran Amhara, burned the churches and carried away an immense booty. The next campaign enabled him to winter at Begmeder: in the following year he hunted the Emperor David through Tigre to the borders of Senaar, gave battle to the Christians on the banks of the Nile, and with his own hand killed the monk Gabriel, then an old man. Reinforced by Gideon and Judith, king and queen of the Samen Jews, and aided by a violent famine which prostrated what had escaped the spear, he perpetrated every manner of atrocity, captured and burned Axum, destroyed the princes of the royal blood on the mountain of Amba Geshe¹⁴, and slew in A.D. 1540, David, third of his name and last emperor of Aethiopia who displayed the magnificence of "King of Kings."

Claudius, the successor to the tottering throne, sent as his ambassador to Europe, one John Bermudez, a Portuguese, who had been detained in Abyssinia, and promised, it is said, submission to the Pontiff of Rome, and the cession of the third of his dominions in return for reinforcements. By order of John III., Don Stephen and Don Christopher, sons of Don Vasco de Gama, cruised up the Red Sea with a powerful flotilla, and the younger brother, landing at Masawwah with 400 musqueteers, slew Nur the governor and sent his head to Gondar, where the Iteghe Sabel Wenghel received it as an omen of good fortune. Thence the Portuguese general imprudently marched in the monsoon season, and was soon confronted upon the plain of Ballut by Mohammed Gragne at the head of 10,000 spearmen and a host of cavalry. On the other side stood a rabble rout of

Abyssinians, and a little band of 350 Portuguese heroes headed by the most chivalrous soldier of a chivalrous age.

According to Father Jerome Lobo¹⁵, who heard the events from an eye-witness, a conference took place between the two captains. Mohammed, encamped in a commanding position, sent a message to Don Christopher informing him that the treacherous Abyssinians had imposed upon the king of Portugal, and that in compassion of his opponent's youth, he would give him and his men free passage and supplies to their own country. The Christian presented the Moslem ambassador with a rich robe, and returned this gallant answer, that "he and his fellow-soldiers were come with an intention to drive Mohammed out of these countries which he had wrongfully usurped; that his present design was, instead of returning back the way he came, as Mohammed advised, to open himself a passage through the country of his enemies; that Mohammed should rather think of determining whether he would fight or yield up his ill-gotten territories than of prescribing measures to him; that he put his whole confidence in the omnipotence of God, and the justice of his cause; and that to show how full a sense he had of Mohammed's kindness, he took the liberty of presenting him with a looking-glass and a pair of pincers."

The answer and the present so provoked the Adel Monarch that he arose from table to attack the little troop of Portuguese, posted upon the declivity of a hill near a wood. Above them stood the Abyssinians, who resolved to remain quiet spectators of the battle, and to declare themselves on the side favoured by victory. Mohammed began the assault with only ten horsemen, against whom an equal number of Portuguese were detached: these fired with so much exactness that nine of the Moors fell and the king was wounded in the leg by Peter de Sa. In the melee which ensued, the Moslems, dismayed by their first failure, were soon broken by the Portuguese muskets and artillery. Mohammed preserved his life with difficulty, he however rallied his men, and entrenched himself at a strong place called Membret (Mamrat), intending to winter there and await succour.

The Portuguese, more desirous of glory than wealth, pursued their enemies, hoping to cut them entirely off: finding, however, the camp impregnable, they entrenched themselves on a hill over against it. Their little host diminished day by day, their friends at Masawwah could not reinforce them, they knew not how to procure provisions, and could not depend upon their Abyssinian allies. Yet

memorious of their countrymen's great deeds, and depending upon divine protection, they made no doubt of surmounting all difficulties.

Mohammed on his part was not idle. He solicited the assistance of the Moslem princes, and by inflaming their religious zeal, obtained a reinforcement of 2000 musqueteers from the Arabs, and a train of artillery from the Turks of Yemen. Animated by these succours, he marched out of his trenches to enter those of the Portuguese, who received him with the utmost bravery, destroyed many of his men, and made frequent sallies, not, however, without sustaining considerable losses.

Don Christopher had already one arm broken and a knee shattered by a musket shot. Valour was at length oppressed by superiority of numbers: the enemy entered the camp, and put the Christians to the spear. The Portuguese general escaped the slaughter with ten men, and retreated to a wood, where they were discovered by a detachment of the enemy.¹⁶ Mohammed, overjoyed to see his most formidable enemy in his power, ordered Don Christopher to take care of a wounded uncle and nephew, telling him that he should answer for their lives, and upon their death, taxed him with having hastened it. The Portuguese roundly replied that he was come to destroy Moslems, not to save them. Enraged at this language, Mohammed placed a stone upon his captive's head, and exposed him to the insults of the soldiery, who inflicted upon him various tortures which he bore with the resolution of a martyr. At length, when offered a return to India as the price of apostacy, the hero's spirit took fire. He answered with the highest indignation, that nothing could make him forsake his Heavenly Master to follow an "imposter," and continued in the severest terms to vilify the "false Prophet," till Mahommed struck off his head.¹⁷ The body was divided into quarters and sent to different places¹⁸, but the Catholics gathered their martyr's remains and interred them. Every Moor who passed by threw a stone upon the grave, and raised in time such a heap that Father Lobo found difficulty in removing it to exhume the relics. He concludes with a pardonable superstition: "There is a tradition in the country, that in the place where Don Christopher's head fell, a fountain sprang up of wonderful virtue, which cured many diseases, otherwise past remedy."

Mohammed Gragne improved his victory by chasing the young Claudius over Abyssinia, where nothing opposed the progress of his arms. At last the few

Portuguese survivors repaired to the Christian emperor, who was persuaded to march an army against the King of Adel. Resolved to revenge their general, the musqueteers demanded the post opposite Mohammed, and directed all their efforts against the part where the Moslem Attila stood. His fellow religionists still relate that when Gragne fell in action, his wife Talwambara¹⁹, the heroic daughter of Mahfuz, to prevent the destruction and dispersion of the host of Islam, buried the corpse privately, and caused a slave to personate the prince until a retreat to safe lands enabled her to discover the stratagem to the nobles.²⁰

Father Lobo tells a different tale. According to him, Peter Leon, a marksman of low stature, but passing valiant, who had been servant to Don Christopher, singled the Adel king out of the crowd, and shot him in the head as he was encouraging his men. Mohammed was followed by his enemy till he fell down dead: the Portuguese then alighting from his horse, cut off one of his ears and rejoined his fellow-countrymen. The Moslems were defeated with great slaughter, and an Abyssinian chief finding Gragne's corpse upon the ground, presented the head to the Negush or Emperor, claiming the honor of having slain his country's deadliest foe. Having witnessed in silence this impudence, Peter asked whether the king had but one ear, and produced the other from his pocket to the confusion of the Abyssinian.

Thus perished, after fourteen years' uninterrupted fighting, the African hero, who dashed to pieces the structure of 2500 years. Like the "Kardillan" of the Holy Land, Mohammed Gragne is still the subject of many a wild and grisly legend. And to the present day the people of Shoa retain an inherited dread of the lowland Moslems.

Mohammed was succeeded on the throne of Adel by the Amir Nur, son of Majid, and, according to some, brother to the "Left-handed." He proposed marriage to Talwambara, who accepted him on condition that he should lay the head of the Emperor Claudius at her feet. In A.D. 1559, he sent a message of defiance to the Negush, who, having saved Abyssinia almost by a miracle, was rebuilding on Debra Work, the "Golden Mount," a celebrated shrine which had been burned by the Moslems. Claudius, despising the eclipses, evil prophecies, and portents which accompanied his enemy's progress, accepted the challenge. On the 22nd March 1559, the armies were upon the point of engaging, when the high priest of Debra Libanos, hastening into the presence of the Negush, declared that in a

vision, Gabriel had ordered him to dissuade the Emperor of Aethiopia from needlessly risking life. The superstitious Abyssinians fled, leaving Claudius supported by a handful of Portuguese, who were soon slain around him, and he fell covered with wounds. The Amir Nur cut off his head, and laid it at the feet of Talwambara, who, in observance of her pledge, became his wife. This Amazon suspended the trophy by its hair to the branch of a tree opposite her abode, that her eyes might be gladdened by the sight: after hanging two years, it was purchased by an Armenian merchant, who interred it in the Sepulchre of St. Claudius at Antioch. The name of the Christian hero who won every action save that in which he perished, has been enrolled in the voluminous catalogue of Abyssinian saints, where it occupies a conspicuous place as the destroyer of Mohammed the Left-handed.

The Amir Nur has also been canonized by his countrymen, who have buried their favourite "Wali" under a little dome near the Jami Mosque at Harar. Shortly after his decisive victory over the Christians, he surrounded the city with its present wall,— a circumstance now invested with the garb of Moslem fable. The warrior used to hold frequent conversations with El Khizr: on one occasion, when sitting upon a rock, still called Gay Humburti — Harar's Navel — he begged that some Sherif might be brought from Meccah, to aid him in building a permanent city. By the use of the "Great Name" the vagrant prophet instantly summoned from Arabia the Sherif Yunis, his son Fakr el Din, and a descendant from the Ansar or Auxiliaries of the Prophet: they settled at Harar, which throve by the blessing of their presence. From this tradition we may gather that the city was restored, as it was first founded and colonized, by hungry Arabs.

The Sherifs continued to rule with some interruptions until but a few generations ago, when the present family rose to power. According to Bruce, they are Jabartis, who, having intermarried with Sayyid women, claim a noble origin. They derive themselves from the Caliph Abubakr, or from Akil, son of Abu Talib, and brother of Ali. The Ulema, although lacking boldness to make the assertion, evidently believe them to be of Galla or pagan extraction.

The present city of Harar is about one mile long by half that breadth. An irregular wall, lately repaired²¹, but ignorant of cannon, is pierced with five large gates²², and supported by oval towers of artless construction. The material of the houses and defences are rough stones, the granites and sandstones of the hills,

cemented, like the ancient Galla cities, with clay. The only large building is the Jami or Cathedral, a long barn of poverty-stricken appearance, with broken-down gates, and two white-washed minarets of truncated conoid shape. They were built by Turkish architects from Mocha and Hodaydah: one of them lately fell, and has been replaced by an inferior effort of Harari art. There are a few trees in the city, but it contains none of those gardens which give to Eastern settlements that pleasant view of town and country combined. The streets are narrow lanes, up hill and down dale, strewn with gigantic rubbish-heaps, upon which repose packs of mangy or one-eyed dogs, and even the best are encumbered with rocks and stones. The habitations are mostly long, flat-roofed sheds, double storied, with doors composed of a single plank, and holes for windows pierced high above the ground, and decorated with miserable wood-work: the principal houses have separate apartments for the women, and stand at the bottom of large court-yards closed by gates of Holcus stalks. The poorest classes inhabit "Gambisa," the thatched cottages of the hill-cultivators. The city abounds in mosques, plain buildings without minarets, and in graveyards stuffed with tombs,— oblong troughs formed by long slabs planted edgewise in the ground. I need scarcely say that Harar is proud of her learning, sanctity, and holy dead. The principal saint buried in the city is Shaykh Umar Abadir El Bakri, originally from Jeddah, and now the patron of Harar: he lies under a little dome in the southern quarter of the city, near the Bisidimo Gate.

The ancient capital of Hadiyah shares with Zebid in Yemen, the reputation of being an Alma Mater, and inundates the surrounding districts with poor scholars and crazy "Widads." Where knowledge leads to nothing, says philosophic Volney, nothing is done to acquire it, and the mind remains in a state of barbarism. There are no establishments for learning, no endowments, as generally in the East, and apparently no encouragement to students: books also are rare and costly. None but the religious sciences are cultivated. The chief Ulema are the Kabir²³ Khalil, the Kabir Yunis, and the Shaykh Jami: the two former scarcely ever quit their houses, devoting all their time to study and tuition: the latter is a Somali who takes an active part in politics.

These professors teach Moslem literature through the medium of Harari, a peculiar dialect confined within the walls. Like the Somali and other tongues in this part of Eastern Africa, it appears to be partly Arabic in etymology and

grammar: the Semitic scion being grafted upon an indigenous root: the frequent recurrence of the guttural *kh* renders it harsh and unpleasant, and it contains no literature except songs and tales, which are written in the modern Naskhi character. I would willingly have studied it deeply, but circumstances prevented:— the explorer too frequently must rest satisfied with descrying from his Pisgah the Promised Land of Knowledge, which another more fortunate is destined to conquer. At Zayla, the Hajj sent to me an Abyssinian slave who was cunning in languages: but he, to use the popular phrase, “showed his right ear with his left hand.” Inside Harar, we were so closely watched that it was found impossible to put pen to paper. Escaped, however, to Wilensi, I hastily collected the grammatical forms and a vocabulary, which will correct the popular assertion that “the language is Arabic: it has an affinity with the Amharic.”²⁴

Harar has not only its own tongue, unintelligible to any save the citizens; even its little population of about 8000 souls is a distinct race. The Somal say of the city that it is a Paradise inhabited by asses: certainly the exterior of the people is highly unprepossessing. Amongst the men, I did not see a handsome face: their features are coarse and debauched; many of them squint, others have lost an eye by small-pox, and they are disfigured by scrofula and other diseases: the bad expression of their countenances justifies the proverb, “Hard as the heart of Harar.” Generally the complexion is a yellowish brown, the beard short, stubby and untractable as the hair, and the hands and wrists, feet and ankles, are large and ill-made. The stature is moderate-sized, some of the elders show the “pudding sides” and the pulpy stomachs of Banyans, whilst others are lank and bony as Arabs or Jews. Their voices are loud and rude. Their dress is a mixture of Arab and Abyssinian. They shave the head, and clip the mustachios and imperial close, like the Shafei of Yemen. Many are bareheaded, some wear a cap, generally the embroidered Indian work, or the common cotton Takiyah of Egypt: a few affect white turbans of the fine Harar work, loosely twisted over the ears. The body-garment is the Tobe, worn flowing as in the Somali country or girt with the dagger-strap round the waist: the richer classes bind under it a Futah or loin-cloth, and the dignitaries have wide Arab drawers of white calico. Coarse leathern sandals, a rosary and a tooth-stick rendered perpetually necessary by the habit of chewing tobacco, complete the costume: and arms being forbidden in the streets, the citizens carry wands five or six feet long.

The women, who, owing probably to the number of female slaves, are much the more numerous, appear beautiful by contrast with their lords. They have small heads, regular profiles, straight noses, large eyes, mouths approaching the Caucasian type, and light yellow complexions. Dress, however, here is a disguise to charms. A long, wide, cotton shirt, with short arms as in the Arab's *Aba*, indigo-dyed or chocolate-coloured, and ornamented with a triangle of scarlet before and behind — the base on the shoulder and the apex at the waist — is girt round the middle with a sash of white cotton crimson-edged. Women of the upper class, when leaving the house, throw a blue sheet over the head, which, however, is rarely veiled. The front and back hair parted in the centre is gathered into two large bunches below the ears, and covered with dark blue muslin or network, whose ends meet under the chin. This coiffure is bound round the head at the junction of scalp and skin by a black satin ribbon which varies in breadth according to the wearer's means: some adorn the gear with large gilt pins, others twine in it a *Taj* or thin wreath of sweet-smelling creeper. The virgins collect their locks, which are generally wavy not wiry, and grow long as well as thick, into a knot tied *a la Diane* behind the head: a curtain of short close plaits escaping from the bunch, falls upon the shoulders, not ungracefully. Silver ornaments are worn only by persons of rank. The ear is decorated with Somali rings or red coral beads, the neck with necklaces of the same material, and the fore-arms with six or seven of the broad circles of buffalo and other dark horns prepared in Western India. Finally, stars are tattooed upon the bosom, the eyebrows are lengthened with dyes, the eyes fringed with *Kohl*, and the hands and feet stained with henna. The female voice is harsh and screaming, especially when heard after the delicate organs of the Somal. The fair sex is occupied at home spinning cotton thread for weaving *Tobes*, sashes, and turbans; carrying their progeny perched upon their backs, they bring water from the wells in large gourds borne on the head; work in the gardens, and — the men considering, like the Abyssinians, such work a disgrace — sit and sell in the long street which here represents the Eastern bazar. Chewing tobacco enables them to pass much of their time, and the rich diligently anoint themselves with ghee, whilst the poorer classes use remnants of fat from the lamps. Their freedom of manners renders a public flogging occasionally indispensable. Before the operation begins, a few gourds full of cold water are

poured over their heads and shoulders, after which a single-thonged whip is applied with vigour.²⁵

Both sexes are celebrated for laxity of morals. High and low indulge freely in intoxicating drinks, beer, and mead. The Amir has established strict patrols, who unmercifully bastinado those caught in the streets after a certain hour. They are extremely bigoted, especially against Christians, the effect of their Abyssinian wars, and are fond of “Jihading” with the Gallas, over whom they boast many a victory. I have seen a letter addressed by the late Amir to the Hajj Sharmarkay, in which he boasts of having slain a thousand infidels, and, by way of bathos, begs for a few pounds of English gunpowder. The Harari hold foreigners in especial hate and contempt, and divide them into two orders, Arabs and Somal.²⁶ The latter, though nearly one third of the population, or 2500 souls, are, to use their own phrase, cheap as dust: their natural timidity is increased by the show of pomp and power, whilst the word “prison” gives them the horrors.

The other inhabitants are about 3000 Bedouins, who “come and go.” Up to the city gates the country is peopled by the Gallas. This unruly race requires to be propitiated by presents of cloth; as many as 600 Tobes are annually distributed amongst them by the Amir. Lately, when the smallpox, spreading from the city, destroyed many of their number, the relations of the deceased demanded and received blood-money: they might easily capture the place, but they preserve it for their own convenience. These Gallas are tolerably brave, avoid matchlock balls by throwing themselves upon the ground when they see the flash, ride well, use the spear skilfully, and although of a proverbially bad breed, are favourably spoken of by the citizens. The Somal find no difficulty in travelling amongst them. I repeatedly heard at Zayla and at Harar that traders had visited the far West, traversing for seven months a country of pagans wearing golden bracelets²⁷, till they reached the Salt Sea, upon which Franks sail in ships.²⁸ At Wilensi, one Mohammed, a Shaykhash, gave me his itinerary of fifteen stages to the sources of the Abbay or Blue Nile: he confirmed the vulgar Somali report that the Hawash and the Webbe Shebayli both take rise in the same range of well wooded mountains which gives birth to the river of Egypt.

The government of Harar is the Amir. These petty princes have a habit of killing and imprisoning all those who are suspected of aspiring to the throne.²⁹ Ahmed’s greatgrandfather died in jail, and his father narrowly escaped the same fate.

When the present Amir ascended the throne he was ordered, it is said, by the Makad or chief of the Nole Gallas, to release his prisoners, or to mount his horse and leave the city. Three of his cousins, however, were, when I visited Harar, in confinement: one of them since that time died, and has been buried in his fetters. The Somal declare that the state-dungeon of Harar is beneath the palace, and that he who once enters it, lives with unkempt beard and untrimmed nails until the day when death sets him free.

The Amir Ahmed's health is infirm. Some attribute his weakness to a fall from a horse, others declare him to have been poisoned by one of his wives.³⁰ I judged him consumptive. Shortly after my departure he was upon the point of death, and he afterwards sent for a physician to Aden. He has four wives. No. 1. is the daughter of the Gerad Hirsi; No. 2. a Sayyid woman of Harar; No. 3. an emancipated slave girl; and No. 4. a daughter of Gerad Abd el Majid, one of his nobles. He has two sons, who will probably never ascend the throne; one is an infant, the other is a boy now about five years old.

[Illustration]

The Amir Ahmed succeeded his father about three years ago. His rule is severe if not just, and it has all the *prestige* of secrecy. As the Amharas say, the "belly of the Master is not known:" even the Gerad Mohammed, though summoned to council at all times, in sickness as in health, dares not offer uncalled-for advice, and the queen dowager, the Gisti Fatimah, was threatened with fetters if she persisted in interference. Ahmed's principal occupations are spying his many stalwart cousins, indulging in vain fears of the English, the Turks, and the Hajj Sharmarkay, and amassing treasure by commerce and escheats. He judges civil and religious causes in person, but he allows them with little interference to be settled by the Kazi, Abd el Rahman bin Umar el Harari: the latter, though a highly respectable person, is seldom troubled; rapid decision being the general predilection. The punishments, when money forms no part of them, are mostly according to Koranic code. The murderer is placed in the market street, blindfolded, and bound hand and foot; the nearest of kin to the deceased then strikes his neck with a sharp and heavy butcher's knife, and the corpse is given over to the relations for Moslem burial. If the blow prove ineffectual a pardon is generally granted. When a citizen draws dagger upon another or commits any petty offence, he is bastinadoed in a peculiar manner: two men ply their

horsewhips upon his back and breast, and the prince, in whose presence the punishment is carried out, gives the order to stop. Theft is visited with amputation of the hand. The prison is the award of state offenders: it is terrible, because the captive is heavily ironed, lies in a filthy dungeon, and receives no food but what he can obtain from his own family,— seldom liberal under such circumstances,— buy or beg from his guards. Fines and confiscations, as usual in the East, are favourite punishments with the ruler. I met at Wilensi an old Harari, whose gardens and property had all been escheated, because his son fled from justice, after slaying a man. The Amir is said to have large hoards of silver, coffee, and ivory: my attendant the Hammal was once admitted into the inner palace, where he saw huge boxes of ancient fashion supposed to contain dollars. The only specie current in Harar is a diminutive brass piece called Mahallak ³¹ — hand-worked and almost as artless a medium as a modern Italian coin. It bears on one side the words:

[Arabic]

(Zaribat el Harar, the coinage of Harar.)

On the reverse is the date, A.H. 1248. The Amir pitilessly punishes all those who pass in the city any other coin.

The Amir Ahmed is alive to the fact that some state should hedge in a prince. Neither weapons nor rosaries are allowed in his presence; a chamberlain's robe acts as spittoon; whenever anything is given to or taken from him his hand must be kissed; even on horseback two attendants fan him with the hems of their garments. Except when engaged on the Haronic visits which he, like his father³², pays to the streets and byways at night, he is always surrounded by a strong body guard. He rides to mosque escorted by a dozen horsemen, and a score of footmen with guns and whips precede him: by his side walks an officer shading him with a huge and heavily fringed red satin umbrella,— from India to Abyssinia the sign of princely dignity. Even at his prayers two or three chosen matchlockmen stand over him with lighted fusees. When he rides forth in public, he is escorted by a party of fifty men: the running footmen crack their whips and shout "Let! Let!" (Go! Go!) and the citizens avoid stripes by retreating into the nearest house, or running into another street.

The army of Harar is not imposing. There are between forty and fifty matchlockmen of Arab origin, long settled in the place, and commanded by a veteran Maghrebi. They receive for pay one dollar's worth of holcus per annum, a quantity sufficient to afford five or six loaves a day: the luxuries of life must be provided by the exercise of some peaceful craft. Including slaves, the total of armed men may be two hundred: of these one carries a Somali or Galla spear, another a dagger, and a third a sword, which is generally the old German cavalry blade. Cannon of small calibre is supposed to be concealed in the palace, but none probably knows their use. The city may contain thirty horses, of which a dozen are royal property: they are miserable ponies, but well trained to the rocks and hills. The Galla Bedouins would oppose an invader with a strong force of spearmen, the approaches to the city are difficult and dangerous, but it is commanded from the north and west, and the walls would crumble at the touch of a six-pounder. Three hundred Arabs and two gallopper guns would take Harar in an hour.

Harar is essentially a commercial town: its citizens live, like those of Zayla, by systematically defrauding the Galla Bedouins, and the Amir has made it a penal offence to buy by weight and scale. He receives, as octroi, from eight to fifteen cubits of Cutch canvass for every donkey-load passing the gates, consequently the beast is so burdened that it must be supported by the drivers. Cultivators are taxed ten per cent., the general and easy rate of this part of Africa, but they pay in kind, which considerably increases the Government share. The greatest merchant may bring to Harar 50_l. worth of goods, and he who has 20_l. of capital is considered a wealthy man. The citizens seem to have a more than Asiatic apathy, even in pursuit of gain. When we entered, a caravan was to set out for Zayla on the morrow; after ten days, hardly one half of its number had mustered. The four marches from the city eastward are rarely made under a fortnight, and the average rate of their Kafilahs is not so high even as that of the Somal.

The principal exports from Harar are slaves, ivory, coffee, tobacco, Wars (safflower or bastard saffron), Tobes and woven cottons, mules, holcus, wheat, "Karanji," a kind of bread used by travellers, ghee, honey, gums (principally mastic and myrrh), and finally sheep's fat and tallows of all sorts. The imports are American sheeting, and other cottons, white and dyed, muslins, red shawls, silks, brass, sheet copper, cutlery (generally the cheap German), Birmingham trinkets,

beads and coral, dates, rice, and loaf sugar, gunpowder, paper, and the various other wants of a city in the wild.

Harar is still, as of old³³, the great “half way house” for slaves from Zangaro, Gurague, and the Galla tribes, Alo and others³⁴: Abyssinians and Amharas, the most valued³⁵, have become rare since the King of Shoa prohibited the exportation. Women vary in value from 100 to 400 Ashrafis, boys from 9 to 150: the worst are kept for domestic purposes, the best are driven and exported by the Western Arabs³⁶ or by the subjects of H. H. the Imam of Muscat, in exchange for rice and dates. I need scarcely say that commerce would thrive on the decline of slavery: whilst the Felateas or man-razzias are allowed to continue, it is vain to expect industry in the land.

Ivory at Harar amongst the Kafirs is a royal monopoly, and the Amir carries on the one-sided system of trade, common to African monarchs. Elephants abound in Jarjar, the Erar forest, and in the Harirah and other valleys, where they resort during the hot season, in cold descending to the lower regions. The Gallas hunt the animals and receive for the spoil a little cloth: the Amir sends his ivory to Berberah, and sells it by means of a Wakil or agent. The smallest kind is called “Ruba Aj” (Quarter Ivory), the better description “Nuss Aj” (Half Ivory), whilst “Aj,” the best kind, fetches from thirty-two to forty dollars per Farasilah of 27 Arab pounds.³⁶

The coffee of Harar is too well known in the markets of Europe to require description: it grows in the gardens about the town, in greater quantities amongst the Western Gallas, and in perfection at Jarjar, a district of about seven days' journey from Harar on the Efat road. It is said that the Amir withholds this valuable article, fearing to glut the Berberah market: he has also forbidden the Harash, or coffee cultivators, to travel lest the art of tending the tree be lost. When I visited Harar, the price per parcel of twenty-seven pounds was a quarter of a dollar, and the hire of a camel carrying twelve parcels to Berberah was five dollars: the profit did not repay labour and risk.

The tobacco of Harar is of a light yellow color, with good flavour, and might be advantageously mixed with Syrian and other growths. The Alo, or Western Gallas, the principal cultivators, plant it with the holcus, and reap it about five months afterwards. It is cocked for a fortnight, the woody part is removed, and the leaf is packed in sacks for transportation to Berberah. At Harar, men prefer it

for chewing as well as smoking: women generally use Surat tobacco. It is bought, like all similar articles, by the eye, and about seventy pounds are to be had for a dollar.

The Wars or Safflower is cultivated in considerable quantities around the city: an abundance is grown in the lands of the Gallas. It is sown when the heavy rains have ceased, and is gathered about two months afterwards. This article, together with slaves, forms the staple commerce between Berberah and Muscat. In Arabia, men dye with it their cotton shirts, women and children use it to stain the skin a bright yellow; besides the purpose of a cosmetic, it also serves as a preservative against cold. When Wars is cheap at Harar, a pound may be bought for a quarter of a dollar.

The Tobes and sashes of Harar are considered equal to the celebrated cloths of Shoa: hand-woven, they as far surpass, in beauty and durability, the vapid produce of European manufactories, as the perfect hand of man excels the finest machinery. On the windward coast, one of these garments is considered a handsome present for a chief. The Harari Tobe consists of a double length of eleven cubits by two in breadth, with a border of bright scarlet, and the average value of a good article, even in the city, is eight dollars. They are made of the fine long-stapled cotton, which grows plentifully upon these hills, and are soft as silk, whilst their warmth admirably adapts them for winter wear. The thread is spun by women with two wooden pins: the loom is worked by both sexes.

Three caravans leave Harar every year for the Berberah market. The first starts early in January, laden with coffee, Tobes, Wars, ghee, gums, and other articles to be bartered for cottons, silks, shawls, and Surat tobacco. The second sets out in February. The principal caravan, conveying slaves, mules, and other valuable articles, enters Berberah a few days before the close of the season: it numbers about 3000 souls, and is commanded by one of the Amir's principal officers, who enjoys the title of Ebi or leader. Any or all of these kafilahs might be stopped by spending four or five hundred dollars amongst the Jibril Abokr tribe, or even by a sloop of war at the emporium. "He who commands at Berberah, holds the beard of Harar in his hand," is a saying which I heard even within the city walls.

The furniture of a house at Harar is simple,— a few skins, and in rare cases a Persian rug, stools, coarse mats, and Somali pillows, wooden spoons, and porringers shaped with a hatchet, finished with a knife, stained red, and brightly

polished. The gourd is a conspicuous article; smoked inside and fitted with a cover of the same material, it serves as cup, bottle, pipe, and water-skin: a coarse and heavy kind of pottery, of black or brown clay, is used by some of the citizens. The inhabitants of Harar live well. The best meat, as in Abyssinia, is beef: it rather resembled, however, in the dry season when I ate it, the lean and stringy sirloins of Old England in Hogarth's days. A hundred and twenty chickens, or sixty-six full-grown fowls, may be purchased for a dollar, and the citizens do not, like the Somal, consider them carrion. Goat's flesh is good, and the black-faced Berberah sheep, after the rains, is, here as elsewhere, delicious. The staff of life is holcus. Fruit grows almost wild, but it is not prized as an article of food; the plantains are coarse and bad, grapes seldom come to maturity; although the brab flourishes in every ravine, and the palm becomes a lofty tree, it has not been taught to fructify, and the citizens do not know how to dress, preserve, or pickle their limes and citrons. No vegetables but gourds are known. From the cane, which thrives upon these hills, a little sugar is made: the honey, of which, as the Abyssinians say, "the land stinks," is the general sweetener. The condiment of East Africa, is red pepper.

To resume, dear L., the thread of our adventures at Harar.

Immediately after arrival, we were called upon by the Arabs, a strange mixture. One, the Haji Mukhtar, was a Maghrebi from Fez: an expatriation of forty years had changed his hissing Arabic as little as his "rocky face." This worthy had a coffee-garden assigned to him, as commander of the Amir's body-guard: he introduced himself to us, however, as a merchant, which led us to look upon him as a spy. Another, Haji Hasan, was a thorough-bred Persian: he seemed to know everybody, and was on terms of bosom friendship with half the world from Cairo to Calcutta, Moslem, Christian and Pagan. Amongst the rest was a boy from Meccah, a Muscat man, a native of Suez, and a citizen of Damascus: the others were Arabs from Yemen. All were most civil to us at first; but, afterwards, when our interviews with the Amir ceased, they took alarm, and prudently cut us. The Arabs were succeeded by the Somal, amongst whom the Hammal and Long Guled found relatives, friends, and acquaintances, who readily recognised them as government servants at Aden. These visitors at first came in fear and trembling with visions of the Harar jail: they desired my men to return the visit by night,

and made frequent excuses for apparent want of hospitality. Their apprehensions, however, soon vanished: presently they began to prepare entertainments, and, as we were without money, they willingly supplied us with certain comforts of life. Our three Habr Awal enemies, seeing the tide of fortune settling in our favour, changed their tactics: they threw the past upon their two Harari companions, and proposed themselves as Abbans on our return to Berberah. This offer was politely staved off; in the first place we were already provided with protectors, and secondly these men belonged to the Ayyal Shirdon, a clan most hostile to the Habr Gerhajis. They did not fail to do us all the harm in their power, but again my good star triumphed.

After a day's repose, we were summoned by the Treasurer, early in the forenoon, to wait upon the Gerad Mohammed. Sword in hand, and followed by the Hammal and Long Guled, I walked to the "palace," and entering a little ground-floor-room on the right of and close to the audience-hall, found the minister sitting upon a large dais covered with Persian carpets. He was surrounded by six of his brother Gerads or councillors, two of them in turbans, the rest with bare and shaven heads: their Tobes, as is customary on such occasions of ceremony, were allowed to fall beneath the waist. The lower part of the hovel was covered with dependents, amongst whom my Somal took their seats: it seemed to be customs' time, for names were being registered, and money changed hands. The Grandees were eating Kat, or as it is here called "Jat."³⁷ One of the party prepared for the Prime Minister the tenderest twigs of the tree, plucking off the points of even the softest leaves. Another pounded the plant with a little water in a wooden mortar: of this paste, called "El Madkuk," a bit was handed to each person, who, rolling it into a ball, dropped it into his mouth. All at times, as is the custom, drank cold water from a smoked gourd, and seemed to dwell upon the sweet and pleasant draught. I could not but remark the fine flavour of the plant after the coarser quality grown in Yemen. Europeans perceive but little effect from it — friend S. and I once tried in vain a strong infusion — the Arabs, however, unaccustomed to stimulants and narcotics, declare that, like opium eaters, they cannot live without the excitement. It seems to produce in them a manner of dreamy enjoyment, which, exaggerated by time and distance, may have given rise to that splendid myth the Lotos, and the Lotophagi. It is held by the Ulema here as in Arabia, "Akl el Salikin," or the Food of the Pious, and literati remark that it has the singular

properties of enlivening the imagination, clearing the ideas, cheering the heart, diminishing sleep, and taking the place of food. The people of Harar eat it every day from 9 A.M. till near noon, when they dine and afterwards indulge in something stronger,— millet-beer and mead.

The Gerad, after polite inquiries, seated me by his right hand upon the Dais, where I ate Kat and fingered my rosary, whilst he transacted the business of the day. Then one of the elders took from a little recess in the wall a large book, and uncovering it, began to recite a long Dua or Blessing upon the Prophet: at the end of each period all present intoned the response, “Allah bless our Lord Mohammed with his Progeny and his Companions, one and all!” This exercise lasting half an hour afforded me the opportunity,— much desired,— of making an impression. The reader, misled by a marginal reference, happened to say, “angels, Men, and Genii:” the Gerad took the book and found written, “Men, Angels, and Genii.” Opinions were divided as to the order of beings, when I explained that human nature, which amongst Moslems is *not* a little lower than the angelic, ranked highest, because of it were created prophets, apostles, and saints, whereas the other is but a “Wasitah” or connection between the Creator and his creatures. My theology won general approbation and a few kinder glances from the elders.

Prayer concluded, a chamberlain whispered the Gerad, who arose, deposited his black coral rosary, took up an inkstand, donned a white “Badan” or sleeveless Arab cloak over his cotton shirt, shuffled off the Dais into his slippers, and disappeared. Presently we were summoned to an interview with the Amir: this time I was allowed to approach the outer door with covered feet. Entering ceremoniously as before, I was motioned by the Prince to sit near the Gerad, who occupied a Persian rug on the ground to the right of the throne: my two attendants squatted upon the humbler mats in front and at a greater distance. After sundry inquiries about the changes that had taken place at Aden, the letter was suddenly produced by the Amir, who looked upon it suspiciously and bade me explain its contents. I was then asked by the Gerad whether it was my intention to buy and sell at Harar: the reply was, “We are no buyers nor sellers³⁸ ; we have become your guests to pay our respects to the Amir — whom may Allah preserve!— and that the friendship between the two powers may endure.” This appearing satisfactory, I added, in lively remembrance of the proverbial delays of Africa, where two or three months may elapse before a letter is answered or a

verbal message delivered, that perhaps the Prince would be pleased to dismiss us soon, as the air of Harar was too dry for me, and my attendants were in danger of the small-pox, then raging in the town. The Amir, who was chary of words, bent towards the Gerad, who briefly ejaculated, "The reply will be vouchsafed:" with this unsatisfactory answer the interview ended.

Shortly after arrival, I sent my Salam to one of the Ulema, Shaykh Jami of the Berteri Somal: he accepted the excuse of ill health, and at once came to see me. This personage appeared in the form of a little black man aged about forty, deeply pitted by small-pox, with a protruding brow, a tufty beard and rather delicate features: his hands and feet were remarkably small. Married to a descendant of the Sherif Yunis, he had acquired great reputation as an Alim or Savan, a peace-policy-man, and an ardent Moslem. Though an imperfect Arabic scholar, he proved remarkably well read in the religious sciences, and even the Meccans had, it was said, paid him the respect of kissing his hand during his pilgrimage. In his second character, his success was not remarkable, the principal results being a spear-thrust in the head, and being generally told to read his books and leave men alone. Yet he is always doing good "lillah," that is to say, gratis and for Allah's sake: his pugnacity and bluntness — the prerogatives of the "peaceful"—gave him some authority over the Amir, and he has often been employed on political missions amongst the different chiefs. Nor has his ardour for propagandism been thoroughly gratified. He commenced his travels with an intention of winning the crown of glory without delay, by murdering the British Resident at Aden³⁹: struck, however, with the order and justice of our rule, he changed his intentions and offered El Islam to the officer, who received it so urbanely, that the simple Eastern repenting having intended to cut the Kafir's throat, began to pray fervently for his conversion. Since that time he has made it a point of duty to attempt every infidel: I never heard, however, that he succeeded with a soul.

The Shaykh's first visit did not end well. He informed me that the old Usmanlis conquered Stamboul in the days of Umar. I imprudently objected to the date, and he revenged himself for the injury done to his fame by the favourite ecclesiastical process of privily damning me for a heretic, and a worse than heathen. Moreover he had sent me a kind of ritual which I had perused in an hour and returned to him: this prepossessed the Shaykh strongly against me, lightly "skimming" books

being a form of idleness as yet unknown to the ponderous East. Our days at Harar were monotonous enough. In the morning we looked to the mules, drove out the cats — as great a nuisance here as at Aden — and ate for breakfast lumps of boiled beef with peppered holcus-scones. We were kindly looked upon by one Sultan, a sick and decrepid Eunuch, who having served five Amirs, was allowed to remain in the palace. To appearance he was mad: he wore upon his poll a motley scratch wig, half white and half black, like Day and Night in masquerades. But his conduct was sane. At dawn he sent us bad plantains, wheaten crusts, and cups of unpalatable coffee-tea ⁴⁰, and, assisted by a crone more decrepid than himself, prepared for me his water-pipe, a gourd fitted with two reeds and a tile of baked clay by way of bowl: now he “knagged” at the slave girls, who were slow to work, then burst into a fury because some visitor ate Kat without offering it to him, or crossed the royal threshold in sandal or slipper. The other inmates of the house were Galla slave-girls, a great nuisance, especially one Berille, an unlovely maid, whose shrill voice and shameless manners were a sad scandal to pilgrims and pious Moslems.

About 8 A.M. the Somal sent us gifts of citrons, plantains, sugar-cane, limes, wheaten bread, and stewed fowls. At the same time the house became full of visitors, Harari and others, most of them pretexting inquiries after old Sultan’s health. Noon was generally followed by a little solitude, the people retiring to dinner and siesta: we were then again provided with bread and beef from the Amir’s kitchen. In the afternoon the house again filled, and the visitors dispersed only for supper. Before sunset we were careful to visit the mules tethered in the court-yard; being half starved they often attempted to desert.⁴¹

It was harvest home at Harar, a circumstance which worked us much annoy. In the mornings the Amir, attended by forty or fifty guards, rode to a hill north of the city, where he inspected his Galla reapers and threshers, and these men were feasted every evening at our quarters with flesh, beer, and mead.⁴² The strong drinks caused many a wordy war, and we made a point of exhorting the pagans, with poor success I own, to purer lives.

We spent our *soiree* alternately bепreaching the Gallas, “chaffing” Mad Said, who, despite his seventy years, was a hale old Bedouin, with a salt and sullen repartee, and quarrelling with the slave-girls. Berille the loud-lunged, or Aminah the pert, would insist upon extinguishing the fat-fed lamp long ere bed-time, or

would enter the room singing, laughing, dancing, and clapping a measure with their palms, when, stoutly aided by old Sultan, who shrieked like a hyaena on these occasions, we ejected her in extreme indignation. All then was silence without: not so — alas!— within. Mad Said snored fearfully, and Abtidon chatted half the night with some Bedouin friend, who had dropped in to supper. On our hard couches we did not enjoy either the *noctes* or the *coenoe deorum*.

The even tenor of such days was varied by a perpetual reference to the rosary, consulting soothsayers, and listening to reports and rumours brought to us by the Somal in such profusion that we all sighed for a discontinuance. The Gerad Mohammed, excited by the Habr Awal, was curious in his inquiries concerning me: the astute Senior had heard of our leaving the End of Time with the Gerad Adan, and his mind fell into the fancy that we were transacting some business for the Hajj Sharmarkay, the popular bugbear of Harar. Our fate was probably decided by the arrival of a youth of the Ayyal Gedid clan, who reported that three brothers had landed in the Somali country, that two of them were anxiously awaiting at Berberah the return of the third from Harar, and that, though dressed like Moslems, they were really Englishmen in government employ. Visions of cutting off caravans began to assume a hard and palpable form: the Habr Awal ceased intriguing, and the Gerad Mohammed resolved to adopt the *suaviter in modo* whilst dealing with his dangerous guest.

Some days after his first visit, the Shaykh Jami, sending for the Hammal, informed him of an intended trip from Harar: my follower suggested that we might well escort him. The good Shaykh at once offered to apply for leave from the Gerad Mohammed; not, however, finding the minister at home, he asked us to meet him at the palace on the morrow, about the time of Kat-eating.

We had so often been disappointed in our hopes of a final “lay-public,” that on this occasion much was not expected. However, about 6 A.M., we were all summoned, and entering the Gerad’s levee-room were, as usual, courteously received. I had distinguished his complaint,— chronic bronchitis,— and resolving to make a final impression, related to him all its symptoms, and promised, on reaching Aden, to send the different remedies employed by ourselves. He clung to the hope of escaping his sufferings, whilst the attendant courtiers looked on approvingly, and begged me to lose no time. Presently the Gerad was sent for by the Amir, and after a few minutes I followed him, on this occasion, alone. Ensued

a long conversation about the state of Aden, of Zayla, of Berberah, and of Stamboul. The chief put a variety of questions about Arabia, and every object there: the answer was that the necessity of commerce confined us to the gloomy rock. He used some obliging expressions about desiring our friendship, and having considerable respect for a people who built, he understood, large ships. I took the opportunity of praising Harar in cautious phrase, and especially of regretting that its coffee was not better known amongst the Franks. The small wizen-faced man smiled, as Moslems say, the smile of Umar ⁴³ : seeing his brow relax for the first time, I told him that, being now restored to health, we requested his commands for Aden. He signified consent with a nod, and the Gerad, with many compliments, gave me a letter addressed to the Political Resident, and requested me to take charge of a mule as a present. I then arose, recited a short prayer, the gist of which was that the Amir's days and reign might be long in the land, and that the faces of his foes might be blackened here and hereafter, bent over his hand and retired. Returning to the Gerad's levee-hut, I saw by the countenances of my two attendants that they were not a little anxious about the interview, and comforted them with the whispered word "Achha"—"all right!"

Presently appeared the Gerad, accompanied by two men, who brought my servants' arms, and the revolver which I had sent to the prince. This was a *contretemps*. It was clearly impossible to take back the present, besides which, I suspected some finesse to discover my feelings towards him: the other course would ensure delay. I told the Gerad that the weapon was intended especially to preserve the Amir's life, and for further effect, snapped caps in rapid succession to the infinite terror of the august company. The minister returned to his master, and soon brought back the information that after a day or two another mule should be given to me. With suitable acknowledgments we arose, blessed the Gerad, bade adieu to the assembly, and departed joyful, the Hammal in his glee speaking broken English, even in the Amir's courtyard.

Returning home, we found the good Shaykh Jami, to whom we communicated the news with many thanks for his friendly aid. I did my best to smooth his temper about Turkish history, and succeeded. Becoming communicative, he informed me that the original object, of his visit was the offer of good offices, he having been informed that, in the town was a man who brought down the birds from heaven, and the citizens having been thrown into great excitement by the

probable intentions of such a personage. Whilst he sat with us, Kabir Khalil, one of the principal Ulema, and one Haji Abdullah, a Shaykh of distinguished fame who had been dreaming dreams in our favour, sent their salams. This is one of the many occasions in which, during a long residence in the East, I have had reason to be grateful to the learned, whose influence over the people when unbiassed by bigotry is decidedly for good. That evening there was great joy amongst the Somal, who had been alarmed for the safety of my companions: they brought them presents of Harari Tobes, and a feast of fowls, limes, and wheaten bread for the stranger.

On the 11th of January I was sent for by the Gerad and received the second mule. At noon we were visited by the Shaykh Jami, who, after a long discourse upon the subject of Sufiism⁴⁴, invited me to inspect his books. When midday prayer was concluded we walked to his house, which occupies the very centre of the city: in its courtyard is "Gay Humburti," the historic rock upon which Saint Nur held converse with the Prophet Khizr. The Shaykh, after seating us in a room about ten feet square, and lined with scholars and dusty tomes, began reading out a treatise upon the genealogies of the Grand Masters, and showed me in half a dozen tracts the tenets of the different schools. The only valuable MS. in the place was a fine old copy of the Koran; the Kamus and the Sihah were there⁴⁵, but by no means remarkable for beauty or correctness. Books at Harar are mostly antiques, copyists being exceedingly rare, and the square massive character is more like Cufic with diacritical points, than the graceful modern Naskhi. I could not, however, but admire the bindings: no Eastern country save Persia surpasses them in strength and appearance. After some desultory conversation the Shaykh ushered us into an inner room, or rather a dark closet partitioned off from the study, and ranged us around the usual dish of boiled beef, holcus bread, and red pepper. After returning to the study we sat for a few minutes,— Easterns rarely remain long after dinner,— and took leave, saying that we must call upon the Gerad Mohammed.

Nothing worthy of mention occurred during our final visit to the minister. He begged me not to forget his remedies when we reached Aden: I told him that without further loss of time we would start on the morrow, Friday, after prayers, and he simply ejaculated, "It is well, if Allah please!" Scarcely had we returned home, when the clouds, which had been gathering since noon, began to discharge

heavy showers, and a few loud thunder-claps to reverberate amongst the hills. We passed that evening surrounded by the Somal, who charged us with letters and many messages to Berberah. Our intention was to mount early on Friday morning. When we awoke, however, a mule had strayed and was not brought back for some hours. Before noon Shaykh Jami called upon us, informed us that he would travel on the most auspicious day — Monday — and exhorted us to patience, deprecating departure upon Friday, the Sabbath. Then he arose to take leave, blessed us at some length, prayed that we might be borne upon the wings of safety, again advised Monday, and promised at all events to meet us at Wilensi. I fear that the Shaykh's counsel was on this occasion likely to be disregarded. We had been absent from our goods and chattels a whole fortnight: the people of Harar are famously fickle; we knew not what the morrow might bring forth from the Amir's mind — in fact, all these African cities are prisons on a large scale, into which you enter by your own will, and, as the significant proverb says, you leave by another's. However, when the mosque prayers ended, a heavy shower and the stormy aspect of the sky preached patience more effectually than did the divine: we carefully tethered our mules, and unwillingly deferred our departure till next morning.

¹ The Ashantees at customs' time run across the royal threshold to escape being seized and sacrificed; possibly the trace of the pagan rite is still preserved by Moslem Harar, where it is now held a mark of respect and always exacted from the citizens.

² I afterwards learned that when a man neglects a summons his door is removed to the royal court-yard on the first day; on the second, it is confiscated. The door is a valuable and venerable article in this part of Africa. According to Bruce, Ptolemy Euergetes engraved it upon the Axum Obelisk for the benefit of his newly conquered Aethiopian subjects, to whom it had been unknown.

³ In Abyssinia, according to the Lord of Geesh, this is a mark of royal familiarity and confidence.

⁴ About seven years ago the Hajj Sharmarkay of Zayla chose as his agent at Harar, one of the Amir's officers, a certain Hajj Jamitay. When this man died Sharmarkay demanded an account from his sons; at Berberah they promised to give it, but returning to Harar they were persuaded, it is believed, by the Gerad Mohammed, to forget their word. Upon this Sharmarkay's friends and relations, incited by one

Husayn, a Somali who had lived many years at Harar in the Amir's favour, wrote an insulting letter to the Gerad, beginning with, "No peace be upon thee, and no blessings of Allah, thou butcher! son of a butcher &c. &c.!" and concluding with a threat to pinion him in the market-place as a warning to men. Husayn carried the letter, which at first excited general terror; when, however, the attack did not take place, the Amir Abubakr imprisoned the imprudent Somali till he died. Sharmarkay by way of reprisals persuaded Alu, son of Sahlah Salaseh, king of Shoa, to seize about three hundred Harari citizens living in his dominions and to keep them two years in durance.

The Amir Abubakr is said on his deathbed to have warned his son against the Gerad. When Ahmad reported his father's decease to Zayla, the Hajj Sharmarkay ordered a grand Maulid or Mass in honour of the departed. Since that time, however, there has been little intercourse and no cordiality between them.

⁵ Thus M. Isenberg (Preface to Ambaric Grammar, p. iv.) calls the city Harrar or Ararge.

⁶ "Harar," is not an uncommon name in this part of Eastern Africa: according to some, the city is so called from a kind of tree, according to others, from the valley below it.

⁷ I say *about* : we were compelled to boil our thermometers at Wilensi, not venturing upon such operation within the city.

⁸ The other six were Efat, Arabini, Duaro, Sharka, Bali and Darah.

⁹ A circumstantial account of the Jihad or Moslem crusades is, I am told, given in the Fath el Habashah, unfortunately a rare work. The Amir of Harar had but one volume, and the other is to be found at Mocha or Hudaydah.

¹⁰ This prince built "Debra Berhan," the "Hill of glory," a church dedicated to the Virgin Mary at Gondar.

¹¹ A prince of many titles: he is generally called Wanag Suggad, "feared amongst the lions," because he spent the latter years of his life in the wild.

¹² Yemen submitted to Sulayman Pasha in A.D. 1538.

¹³ "Gragne," or in the Somali dialect "Guray," means a left-handed man; Father Lobo errs in translating it "the Lame."

¹⁴ This exploit has been erroneously attributed to Nur, the successor of Mohammed.

¹⁵ This reverend Jesuit was commissioned in A.D. 1622, by the Count de Vidigueira, Viceroy of the Indies, to discover where his relative Don Christopher was buried, and to procure some of the relics. Assisted by the son in law of the Abyssinian Emperor, Lobo marched with an army through the Gallas, found the martyr's teeth and lower jaw, his arms and a picture of the Holy Virgin which he always carried about him. The precious remains were forwarded to Goa.

I love the style of this old father, so unjustly depreciated by our writers, and called ignorant peasant and liar by Bruce, because he claimed for his fellow countrymen the honor of having discovered the Coy Fountains. The Nemesis who never sleeps punished Bruce by the justest of retributions. His pompous and inflated style, his uncommon arrogance, and over-weening vanity, his affectation of pedantry, his many errors and misrepresentations, aroused against him a spirit which embittered the last years of his life. It is now the fashion to laud Bruce, and to pity his misfortunes. I cannot but think that he deserved them.

¹⁶ Bruce, followed by most of our modern authors, relates a circumstantial and romantic story of the betrayal of Don Christopher by his mistress, a Turkish lady of uncommon beauty, who had been made prisoner.

The more truth-like pages of Father Lobo record no such silly scandal against the memory of the "brave and holy Portuguese." Those who are well read in the works of the earlier eastern travellers will remember their horror of "handling heathens after that fashion." And amongst those who fought for the faith an *affaire de coeur* with a pretty pagan was held to be a sin as deadly as heresy or magic.

¹⁷ Romantic writers relate that Mohammed decapitated the Christian with his left hand.

¹⁸ Others assert, in direct contradiction to Father Lobo, that the body was sent to different parts of Arabia, and the head to Constantinople.

¹⁹ Bruce, followed by later authorities, writes this name Del Wumbarea.

²⁰ Talwambara, according to the Christians, after her husband's death, and her army's defeat, threw herself into the wilds of Atbara, and recovered her son Ali Gerad by releasing Prince Menas, the brother of the Abyssinian emperor, who in David's reign had been carried prisoner to Adel.

The historian will admire these two widely different accounts of the left-handed hero's death. Upon the whole he will prefer the Moslem's tradition from the air of

truth pervading it, and the various improbabilities which appear in the more detailed story of the Christians.

²¹ Formerly the Waraba, creeping through the holes in the wall, rendered the streets dangerous at night. They are now destroyed by opening the gates in the evening, enticing in the animals by slaughtering cattle, and closing the doors upon them, when they are safely speared.

²² The following are the names of the gates in Harari and Somali:

Eastward. Argob Bari (Bar in Amharic is a gate, *e.g.* Ankobar, the gate of Anko, a Galla Queen, and Argob is the name of a Galla clan living in this quarter), by the Somal called Erar.

North. Asum Bari (the gate of Axum), in Somali, Faldano or the Zayla entrance.

West. Asmadim Bari or Hamaraisa.

South. Badro Bari or Bab Bida.

South East. Sukutal Bari or Bisidimo.

At all times these gates are carefully guarded; in the evening the keys are taken to the Amir, after which no one can leave the city till dawn.

²³ Kabir in Arabic means great, and is usually applied to the Almighty; here it is a title given to the principal professors of religious science.

²⁴ This is equivalent to saying that the language of the Basque provinces is French with an affinity to English.

²⁵ When ladies are bastinadoed in more modest Persia, their hands are passed through a hole in a tent wall, and fastened for the infliction to a Falakah or pole outside.

²⁶ The hate dates from old times. Abd el Karim, uncle to the late Amir Abubakr, sent for sixty or seventy Arab mercenaries under Haydar Assal the Auliki, to save him against the Gallas. The matchlockmen failing in ammunition, lost twenty of their number in battle and retired to the town, where the Gallas, after capturing Abd el Karim, and his brother Abd el Rahman, seized the throne, and, aided by the citizens, attempted to massacre the strangers. These, however, defended themselves gallantly, and would have crowned the son of Abd el Rahman, had he not in fear

declined the dignity; they then drew their pay, and marched with all the honors of war to Zayla.

Shortly before our arrival, the dozen of petty Arab pedlars at Harar, treacherous intriguers, like all their dangerous race, had been plotting against the Amir. One morning when they least expected it, their chief was thrown into a prison which proved his grave, and the rest were informed that any stranger found in the city should lose his head. After wandering some months among the neighbouring villages, they were allowed to return and live under surveillance. No one at Harar dared to speak of this event, and we were cautioned not to indulge our curiosity.

²⁷ This agrees with the Hon. R. Curzon's belief in Central African "diggings." The traveller once saw an individual descending the Nile with a store of nuggets, bracelets, and gold rings similar to those used as money by the ancient Egyptians.

²⁸ M. Krapf relates a tale current in Abyssinia; namely, that there is a remnant of the slave trade between Guineh (the Guinea coast) and Shoa. Connexion between the east and west formerly existed: in the time of John the Second, the Portuguese on the river Zaire in Congo learned the existence of the Abyssinian church. Travellers in Western Africa assert that Fakihis or priests, when performing the pilgrimage pass from the Fellatah country through Abyssinia to the coast of the Red Sea. And it has lately been proved that a caravan line is open from the Zanzibar coast to Benguela.

²⁹ All male collaterals of the royal family, however, are not imprisoned by law, as was formerly the case at Shoa.

³⁰ This is a mere superstition; none but the most credulous can believe that a man ever lives after an Eastern dose.

³¹ The name and coin are Abyssinian. According to Bruce,

20	Mahallaks	are	worth	1	Grush.
12	Grush	"	"	1	Miskal.
4 Miskal " " 1 Wakiyah (ounce).					

At Harar twenty-two plantains (the only small change) = one Mahallak, twenty-two Mahallaks = one Ashrafi (now a nominal coin,) and three Ashrafi = one dollar.

Lieut. Cruttenden remarks, "The Ashrafi stamped at the Harar mint is a coin peculiar to the place. It is of silver and the twenty-second part of a dollar. The only specimen I have been able to procure bore the date of 910 of the Hagira, with the name of the Amir on one side, and, on its reverse, 'La Ilaha ill 'Allah.'" This traveller adds in a

note, "the value of the Ashrafi changes with each successive ruler. In the reign of Emir Abd el Shukoor, some 200 years ago, it was of gold." At present the Ashrafi, as I have said above, is a fictitious medium used in accounts.

³² An old story is told of the Amir Abubakr, that during one of his nocturnal excursions, he heard three of his subjects talking treason, and coveting his food, his wife, and his throne. He sent for them next morning, filled the first with good things, and bastinadoed him for not eating more, flogged the second severely for being unable to describe the difference between his own wife and the princess, and put the third to death.

³³ El Makrizi informs us that in his day Hadiyah supplied the East with black Eunuchs, although the infamous trade was expressly forbidden by the Emperor of Abyssinia.

³³ The Arusi Gallas are generally driven direct from Ugadayn to Berberah.

³⁴ "If you want a brother (in arms)," says the Eastern proverb, "buy a Nubian, if you would be rich, an Abyssinian, and if you require an ass, a Sawahili (negro)." Formerly a small load of salt bought a boy in Southern Abyssinia, many of them, however, died on their way to the coast.

³⁵ The Firman lately issued by the Sultan and forwarded to the Pasha of Jeddah for the Kaimakan and the Kazi of Mecca, has lately caused a kind of revolution in Western Arabia. The Ulema and the inhabitants denounced the rescript as opposed to the Koran, and forced the magistrate to take sanctuary. The Kaimakan came to his assistance with Turkish troops, the latter, however, were soon pressed back into their fort. At this time, the Sherif Abd el Muttalib arrived at Meccah, from Taif, and almost simultaneously Reshid Pasha came from Constantinople with orders to seize him, send him to the capital, and appoint the Sherif Nazir to act until the nomination of a successor, the state prisoner Mohammed bin Aun.

The tumult redoubled. The people attributing the rescript to the English and French Consuls of Jeddah, insisted upon pulling down their flags. The Pasha took them under his protection, and on the 14th January, 1856, the "Queen" steamer was despatched from Bombay, with orders to assist the government and to suppress the contest.

³⁶ This weight, as usual in the East, varies at every port. At Aden the Farasilah is 27 lbs., at Zayla 20 lbs., and at Berberah 35 lbs.

³⁷ See Chap. iii. El Makrizi, describing the kingdom of Zayla, uses the Harari not the Arabic term; he remarks that it is unknown to Egypt and Syria, and compares its leaf to that of the orange.

³⁸ In conversational Arabic "we" is used without affectation for "I."

³⁹ The Shaykh himself gave me this information. As a rule it is most imprudent for Europeans holding high official positions in these barbarous regions, to live as they do, unarmed and unattended. The appearance of utter security may impose, where strong motives for assassination are wanting. At the same time the practice has occasioned many losses which singly, to use an Indian statesman's phrase, would have "dimmed a victory."

⁴⁰ In the best coffee countries, Harar and Yemen, the berry is reserved for exportation. The Southern Arabs use for economy and health — the bean being considered heating — the Kishr or follicle. This in Harar is a woman's drink. The men considering the berry too dry and heating for their arid atmosphere, toast the leaf on a girdle, pound it and prepare an infusion which they declare to be most wholesome, but which certainly suggests weak senna. The boiled coffee-leaf has been tried and approved of in England; we omit, however, to toast it.

⁴¹ In Harar a horse or a mule is never lost, whereas an ass straying from home is rarely seen again.

⁴² This is the Abyssinian "Tej," a word so strange to European organs, that some authors write it "Zatsh." At Harar it is made of honey dissolved in about fifteen parts of hot water, strained and fermented for seven days with the bark of a tree called Kudidah; when the operation is to be hurried, the vessel is placed near the fire. Ignorant Africa can ferment, not distil, yet it must be owned she is skilful in her rude art. Every traveller has praised the honey-wine of the Highlands, and some have not scrupled to prefer it to champagne. It exhilarates, excites and acts as an aphrodisiac; the consequence is, that at Harar all men, pagans and sages, priests and rulers, drink it.

⁴³ The Caliph Umar is said to have smiled once and wept once. The smile was caused by the recollection of his having eaten his paste-gods in the days of ignorance. The tear was shed in remembrance of having buried alive, as was customary amongst the Pagan Arabs, his infant daughter, who, whilst he placed her in the grave, with her little hands beat the dust off his beard and garment.

⁴⁴ The Eastern parent of Free-Masonry.

⁴⁵ Two celebrated Arabic dictionaries.

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