

Then the poor dog's lament of his lot :—

Was ever cur so cursed? he cried.  
What star did at my birth preside?  
Am I for life by compact bound  
To tread the wheel's eternal round?"

The economical practice of burning peeled Rushes drawn through melted grease was common till towards the close of the last century, and there was a regular utensil for holding the rush in burning. Gilbert White describes this simple piece of domestic economy, and shows how each rush, before dipping in the fat, costs one thirty-third of a farthing, and one-eleventh afterwards. Thus, a poor family will enjoy five and a half hours of comfortable light for a farthing, while the very poor, who are always the worst economists, and therefore must continue very poor, buy a halfpenny candle every evening, which, in their blowing open rooms, does not burn much longer than two hours. Aubrey describes this rush-burning at Ockley, in Surrey, about the year 1673, which may have been derived from the Romans, who were much in this neighbourhood; for Pliny tells us that the Romans employed rushes for candle-wicks.

#### LIFE ON AMBA MAGDALA, THE STATE PRISON OF ABYSSINIA.

We have received from one of the captives in Abyssinia, the subjoined paper, containing a most interesting account of prison life at Magdala. Some of the letters previously received by his relatives in England, describe the difficulties under which correspondence with the outer world has been managed. On the 9th of June, 1867, he wrote, "Tell my parents that for more than a year we did not write at all, for fear the letters might be taken. Afterwards, when we began to take courage, we sent only such small letters as could be sewn in the clothes of servants." On the 3rd of September, "Ellen (his wife, one of the prisoners at Debra Tabor), thinking I might be without money, sent some Venetian gold pieces in a hollow stick." The rebels between Debra Tabor and Magdala allowed these messengers to pass, while refusing passage to any of the King's people. One of the earliest letters, 17th July, 1865, was written when both feet were loaded with heavy chains, and the right hand fettered together with the feet, "so that I am not able to stand upright, and I believe a bed of three and a half feet in length is quite sufficient for me." During the latter period of the captivity more liberty has been allowed, as will appear from the following narrative, which he has contrived to write, and which reached us in November :—

WRITTEN IN AUGUST, NEAR THE END OF THE RAINY SEASON, 1867.

I.

MAGDALA, which till now scarcely occupied a place on the map of Abyssinia, has been made so familiar to all those who sympathise with helpless suffering, that I think a few remarks on this remote locality may not be devoid of interest at this present moment.

The manners, tastes, character, and occupations of the people are pretty nearly the same throughout Abyssinia, and, having given a description of them of one district, all that can be said of the country at large is known. But as there is a marked difference, even in England, between a quiet country village and a garrison town, it cannot fail to be so here, where only two classes of people are residing—the soldiers and the prisoners—whose position is identical in this particular, that neither of the two are free agents, and that, once here, *both* must remain until it pleases their tyrannical master to remove

them. Before referring, however, to each of them specially, it is necessary that some account should be given of the locality, which is as unique in its character as the population inhabiting it.

Magdala, a nearly circular rock, about one mile and a half in length, situated on the most southern extremity of Amhara Proper, and bordered on the north by Dwnd, and on the other sides by the Wollo Gallas, is generally said to be a mountain fortress, which term conveys to our minds the idea that it is considerably elevated above the surrounding country; but this is not the case. It was in antediluvian times a portion of a large plain; but changes in the surface of the country have caused it to be now surrounded partly by a chasm, the bed of mountain torrents during the rains. The opposite plain towards the south raised itself slantingly, while the other tract of land, from here past the Bashiloh until Dwnd, presents one confused mass of tremendous rocks, precipices, and ravines, on whose sides and depth the worst of roads in Abyssinia winds along. Magdala is approached on the northern side by a small pass, leading to a platform of some thirty acres of ground, called Selamke, and fifty feet more of ascent and the gates of the Amba (hill-fort) are reached, of which there are two, a northern and an eastern, both too feeble to sustain any great amount of pressure. Although offering insurmountable obstacles against any efforts to reduce it which might be made by the native rabble, who are called soldiery, yet a European is surprised that a place so weak and so easily to be taken should be chosen as the storehouse of the riches, and, what is of equal value, for the confinement of the prisoners of the king. The opposite Galla border, higher than Magdala, is not farther than 800 yards, while the other hills overlooking it are near enough to be made use of for batteries. During the rainy season, when the smallest rivulet becomes impassable, Magdala is entirely cut off from all communication with the rest of Abyssinia, by a river which rises in the mountains of Lasta, takes first a westerly direction, makes, about a day's distance from here, near Amba Geeshen, a sudden bend, sweeps south-west past Magdala, between high but narrow rocky beds, takes in its course the Fiddah, a river of nearly equal size, as well as a great number of temporary streamlets, torrents, and cataracts, carrying everything before its force and speed, and joins the Abbäy, or Abyssinian branch of the Nile, about three days' distance from here.

The scenery towards the west, in the district of Worierlaimanot, is indeed grand and imposing at all times, but more so this season. Looking over those regions in the morning, after a copious fall of rain, one sees at the distance of four miles, in a straight line, no less than seven cascades, dashing into the chasm from a height of several hundred feet, and causing their roar to be heard far and wide. At this hour the high banks fronting Magdala are covered with a beautiful dense white cloud, like a curtain hiding from view the mountains behind it. As the sun shines forth, shedding his splendour on the scene before us, the vapours gradually vanish, the tumbling waters, not unlike a number of broad silvery streaks, momentarily detained by a projecting block, are repelled, thrown into the air as spray, and look like so many diamonds reflected on by the light. There rises now in the background a chain of mountains, to the height of 14,000 feet, whose tops are the greater part of the year overspread with snow.

The climate is very salubrious, and not at all what one expects so near the line. In consequence of its altitude of 9,000 feet, it is never unbearably hot in the day, while it is pleasant enough to sit near a nice fire mornings and



evenings, all the year round. A bracing and refreshing wind is wafted continually from the Galla plain, which carries away the unhealthy vapours from crowded and dirty places, such as the common prison, and preserves its unfortunate inmates in spite of filth, hunger, and nakedness. The seasons also differ from the rest of Abyssinia, except the Wollos and Shoah. Until two days' distance from here, the periodical rains last four months uninterruptedly, with mostly unpleasant, dark, chilly days, and such fearful thunderstorms and vivid lightnings that one is sometimes inclined to think the very foundations of the earth will cleave asunder. For eight long months subsequently the heaven, hermetically sealed, hangs above like brass, and the blue sky, in beautiful monotony, does not yield, except by caprice, one drop of water to refresh the dying vegetation. Magdala, however, enjoys an occasional shower during the ten months of summer, although not of sufficient quantity to carry on cultivation. Any one having resided in tropical climates can appreciate such changes; for, though it may not revive the drooping plants in the garden, yet it supplies the human frame with fresh energy, and the mind with buoyancy. The remaining two months of the year are filled up by what is frequently denominated winter, with clear sunny days—except sometimes in the afternoon, when a heavy storm of short duration bursts forth—and rainy nights. During this season everything grows most luxuriantly. European and Indian vegetables can be cultivated with little trouble and no expense, and one has soon the satisfaction of seeing more foliage and stronger stalks than the same plants have in Europe. There is here a bed of English sweet peas, quite giants in their kind. Sown about two months ago, they have reached the height of eight feet, and may add two more before they fade. The leaves are at least five inches in diameter, and the stalks are stout enough to stand nearly without support. Also some tomatoes seven months old, which are in Egypt and elsewhere no more than shrubs, have been so trained as to form a large bower. The plants measure at least fifteen feet from the ground. They have yielded an abundant return for several months past, and are at the present moment literally crowded with ripe green fruit of every size, blossoms, and buds. By occasionally watering them in the summer, they always bear. Trees of any size would not succeed, except on a hill on the south-west, because only a few feet of soil overspread the rock. Thus it will be perceived that Providence has dealt very bountifully with this part of the country, giving it "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons;" and it remains only for its population to divest itself of slothfulness and indifference, in order to convert it into a beautiful garden.

Previous to 1853 Magdala was a Galla possession; but when the ambitious Theodorus, not satisfied with his conquests of the whole kingdom, turned his eye towards Shoah and the Wollos, whom no human power had hitherto been able to teach why they should not declare themselves independent as soon as the invader had left their territory, he thought it necessary to take Magdala in his road first. The besieging army arrived under its gates, but was successfully repulsed by means of great stones being hurled down. A number of Amharas were killed, and, acknowledging the futility of their efforts, withdrew out of the reach of those destroying missiles. The Gallas, however, in their turn, reflecting that the invincible Theodorus had prostrated at his feet Ras Alea, ruler of Amhara, Dejaz or Dedjatch Ooi of Tigré, and the hereditary powerful governors of Godjam, Dedjatch Goshoo, and his son Birroo, became disheartened, and

resolved to evacuate the fortress. In the stillness of the night they accordingly fled by a third now closed gate, and were not perceived by the enemy. During the following few days the soldiers of the king, not having forgotten yet the first spirited defence, were afraid, in spite of the encouragements and threatenings of the master, to expose their heads again; but when, after another lapse of some days, no living being appeared and no stones were flung, an old man ventured to ascend, knocked against the door, and succeeded in opening it. He entered, scanned the plain before him, but discovered nothing hostile; then he called his expectant brother warriors below to follow him. After repeated persuasions, he at last induced them, headed by the brave Theodorus, to proceed. A grand *fête* was given by the victorious Emperor, at which the soldiers boasted of their gallantry and feats of heroism. Thenceforward Magdala was employed solely as a store-house. But when, in November, 1864, Theodorus received tidings of the revolt of the Shoas and the Gallas, and planned an expedition, he imagined, as he had done for many years past, that the Turks would attack in his absence the strong mountain fortress of Tchelga, on the north-west confines, and transferred therefore all his living property to Magdala, which after that time became the state prison of the kingdom. Fifteen hundred fusiliers and spearmen were left to garrison it and to guard the prisoners, headed by a Ras and council of nine, which is, however, so constituted that not one of them can perform the merest trifle without consulting the opinion of the rest, and not even the Ras himself is allowed to pass the gates unless he has previously obtained the permission of all the chiefs. The private soldiery are under the same restriction in this respect. Everything is so cannily, and with so much foresight, arranged by the suspicious tyrant that treachery is all but impossible. It must be confessed that no greater calamity could befall him than the loss of this Amba—nothing would more hasten his fall and inspire the rebels with more courage and confidence. He therefore does everything in his power to make the guards contented with their lot, and pays them well—that is to say, better by far than the soldiers in the camp, when he has the means of doing so. But his treasury is not always filled, and lately, when he perceived his power gradually dwindling down, in order to keep the garrison loyal, in lieu of ready cash he promoted them in military rank, gave to all the petty chiefs high-sounding titles, and—strange anomaly—made of every common soldier a nobleman. Although they are supposed to receive rations and emoluments according to their newly-acquired station, and expected their respective salaries to be proportionately increased, yet they did not even obtain the much-desired silk shirt, the mark of their nobility. The royal granaries are nearly exhausted, the surrounding districts rebellious, so that no fresh supply can be expected, and the little money which was given to them in different instalments for the last fourteen months—twenty Maria Theresa dollars for the Ras and other high functionaries, fifteen for Ambels (colonel), and ten for the inferior officers—have long since been spent. But pride is inherent in the nature of the Abyssinian. Although he comprehends well enough the worthlessness of his title, preferring much rather a measure of grain, yet he is happy enough if he can but be called by his inferiors a noble of the realm, and denominate himself the slave and donkey of King Theodorus. According to old-established customs, nobody could be a Dedjasmatch, save a hereditary governor of a province, a prince in his own right, or one who was appointed by royal decree deputy over a part of the country, and to whom a special license



was given to have a certain number of negareets (drums). Byëtroadad, however, rank in the army second after the King, of whom there were never more than eight in the whole army; but Magdala contains as many now, and Dedjasmatches more than the entire empire, which is at present parcelled out by rebels, possesses provinces. I would remind the reader that the ruler of Abyssinia does not stand isolated in the history of nations in this wholesale creation of nobles. Maria Theresa of Austria, after the sanguinary seven years' war, wishing to reward a regiment of Hungarian soldiers for their bravery and the eminent services they had rendered her, ennobled every one of them; and, although they possessed nothing in the world to support their new position becomingly, they were glad enough to prefix a "Herr von" to their Magyar names. Human nature is everywhere the same, and, whether European or African, the descendants of both will extol for many generations, whether deserved or not, the heroism of their ancestors.

The duties of the common soldiers (for so I shall term all those to the degree of Ambel, for the sake of distinction) are not onerous. They have to guard the gates, the pass leading to Selamke, the King's store-house, the outer hedges of his harem, his new "friends," the Europeans, and the common prison. They have to cut and carry the wood for hedges, and for the houses of the King and chiefs. No great taste or architectural beauty is exhibited in these public buildings—all are of a conical shape, built of branches, plastered with mud, and having a roof of reeds and straw. At stated times, when the female servants and slaves descend to the opposite side of the chasm for the sake of gathering wood, they are accompanied by soldiers, lest they should be carried off by way-laying Gallas. If a female is seized by them, she is sold as a slave; if a youth or boy, he is cruelly mutilated, and frequently killed on the spot. Such an instance happened not many weeks since.

The mode of guarding the prisoners must not be supposed to be as rigorous as would be the case in Europe were there no substantially-built prisons existing. The soldiers do not trouble much about watching, and it is therefore no difference to them whether the prisoners sleep in their hut on a tanned skin—not possessing anything further in the way of bedding—or in the prison. In order, however, that an idea may be formed of how they execute their duty, let us imagine them to be on guard in the enclosure of the Europeans. Towards dusk a petty chief arrives with about a dozen men, carrying matchlocks, which it would cost great persuasion to entice to fire, or with spears and shields, and each a piece of wood in his hand for a fire, around which to beguile a few tedious hours. A tent being pitched during the rains, or sitting in the open air at other seasons, they dispose of their arms, and smoke, passing the same pipe round. At first the meeting is quiet and decorous enough; but as the minutes fly the conversation becomes more lively; stories, not always of the most modest kind, are related; jokes at one another's expense are dealt out, which are hailed with roars of laughter by the gray-headed and the youth. It seldom fails that a musical genius is amongst them\* whose voice and improvised

rhymes delight and elicit the undivided admiration of the circle of friends into whose mind no thought about their charge has entered yet. The mirth and gaiety increase every moment. The kerar, a primitive-looking musical instrument, with but three strings, and as many discordant notes, of which Tubal Cain even would have been ashamed, joins its monotonous air. Now the noise is at its height. A youth, on whose chin the first signs of manhood have not appeared as yet, and in whose hand the spear has not quivered, except for exercise, jumps in front, and with the mien of a maniac, raised arms, and the whole body convulsed, bawls and brags of his personal valour and his chivalrous deeds. Sometimes this little *soirée* is interrupted by high words and quarrels, which can only be appeased by the chief with such sound arguments as the stick. Order restored, it is soon time to disperse to the different houses which the Europeans inhabit. Two guards enter without ceremony—and with their spears, shields, and heavy bludgeons, the very image of shillalahs, wherewith to inspire respect—the humble abode where two of us are preparing for rest. Having disposed of their arms, they unwind their girdle, a piece of cotton cloth half a yard broad by ten yards long, which is twisted round and round their bodies. I must stop short to say a few words about this article of dress. Barbarous as it appears, the girdle is of great value to the Abyssinian. It supports him in his work, and his many walks over mountains and through deep valleys, and he would live all his life on the poorest fare rather than be deprived of his digg. I have many times thought that the girdles which were worn in Palestine must have been something similar; perhaps more artificial, but just as bulky. If so, what a beautiful metaphor is that which the apostle employs in speaking to the Ephesians, vi. 14, "Having your loins girt about with truth," that you faint not in your ascents and descents and wanderings through life. Practise every self-denial rather than be for a moment without this treasure—truth.

Having approached the fire, one of them utters a characteristic grunt, an invitation to talk to them. Knowing that they possess no art of life which is not imported from other lands, the Abyssinians yet imagine themselves the most superior, the most enlightened, and most civilised beings on the face of the earth, and heartily despise the Europeans; but their lamentable ignorance never appears to greater disadvantage than in these conversations. Their knowledge of geography is so limited that they are only aware of four countries—viz., "England, Jerusalem, the Turks, and Moscow"—besides their own, which they think the largest and best cultivated. Speaking of the direction they are situated, they have no other term but "this side or the other side of the sea;" and, although repeatedly assured that Europe possesses more commodities, and in larger quantities than are necessary for consumption, they ask the same questions over and over again: "Is there grass, rain, cows, grain, and churches in your country; and are the dead buried or left for food to the hyenas?" On being told that we are deficient in teff (grain in appearance like the seed in grass), hydromel, and mules, Europe is abandoned as lost. Not unsimilar to the Arab who had visited England: when relating all the wonders he had seen abroad, his *confrères* became so enraged with him that they resolved upon his death; but on being informed that there exist no deserts and no green palm trees in that far-off region, they were reconciled to him, saying, "No country like our own." There are, however, a good number now of these uninvited guests who endeavour to draw profit from their

\* I annex a specimen of an Abyssinian war-song, with a rough paraphrase in English:—

"Agarekh rook nân  
Sheshtah, âtesâlekoo  
Goradekhên mâsasoo  
Surekh Anâmakoo."

"Thou art far from the land where thou first saw'st the light,  
Therefore stand thy ground firmly, and think not of flight;  
Thy faulchion unsheathe, and prepare for the strife;  
A victor return, or bid farewell to life."



intercourse with us, inquiring about religion. Corrupt as the Abyssinians are in morals, and in their doctrines of Christianity, they are at all times ready and willing to converse on religious subjects.

Having satisfied all their interrogatories, they look once more with an eye of envy on our simple bed-clothes, talk of their distress, beg for some snuff and a shirt (they find, to their grief, that neither one nor the other is to be had), say their prayers in Ethiopic, of which they don't understand a syllable, in an irreverent and hurried manner, spread their skin, search, like the patriarch Jacob, for a stone as pillow, wrap their shamahs—which by imaginative minds has been compared to a Roman toga, but which has more resemblance to a sheet—closer around their bodies, forget their spear and formidable club, and sleep until the morning as sound as if they had been drugged. If one or the other of us rises at night, and the guardians notice it by accident, they inquire why they are not called. Curious request: the prisoner to entreat the soldier to watch him!

Bowing and cringing to the superior, and arrogant in manners to the inferior, this has become second nature in the Abyssinian. He *must* profess love where only antipathy exists, and loyalty when hatred rankles deeply in his breast. His pride knows no bounds: however ragged his clothes may have become, he would think it far below his dignity to walk a hundred steps without being followed by one or two little ragamuffins; and even the women, whose white loose cotton dresses are black and shining with grease (dropped from their butter-anointed heads), would be ashamed to go to the market without a few silver tinsels round neck and ankles, and attended by a maid-in-waiting.

Now and then the monotony of the existence of the garrison is broken by a feast, given by some chief in honour of a saint, or on a holy day; and then they can gorge themselves with brendo (raw meat fresh from the cow), and drink as much bad mead as they like, and deck themselves with the remaining shreds of their silk shirts, and boast to their hearts' content. Things, however, have entirely changed in this respect now. The King is not in a position to give them cows or money, the officers have nothing to spare, and the soldier is half-starved and ill-clad. The wife of the latter spins some cotton, makes a basket, disposes of a few things which may be left in the house to appease the gnawing hunger. A little barley bread and red pepper would suffice them if it can but be got. Many would gladly desert to the rebels, but to be caught involves the most cruel, lingering death—more cruel by far than to be guilty of the same crime in the rebel camp. He must drag along his miserable life, until a new master opens new sources and inspires with fresh hopes, or until a gleam of success light upon the head of the old one.

A great deal of dissatisfaction has been manifested lately. Several houses were set on fire, some desertions took place, and soldiers expressed their real sentiments to faithful comrades. The chiefs, who have nothing to gain, but everything to lose, with a new ruler, perceived this state of things with terror. Quickly a report was spread that a royal messenger had arrived, with the news that the King has conquered a rebel, and that he himself is coming soon. Immediately the cannons and guns are fired, men are shouting, and women join in the general excitement which these glad tidings have produced: not that they rejoice over the victory, which they well know is but imaginary, but to make an outward show of loyalty; for it *may* be, they argue, that the cruel tyrant, whom they fear as children the bogie, is on the road towards Magdala.

Time passes on; the King does not come, but instead of this those of the soldiers who can conveniently be spared are collected to resist, it is said, the meditated attack of the Gallas. The chiefs, however, have already spied through the glass that but a few old women are descending the height. They set forward on the expedition, and return in high glee, boasting that the Musuimen have decamped when the Amharas hove in sight. Lately the same alarm has been frequently repeated, until really a Mohammedan host became visible. All faces assumed then an anxious air; not only was no sortie made, but none felt comfortable until the enemy had withdrawn,—at least for a time.

Indolence is a remarkable feature in the Abyssinian. The continual earnest prayer of the prisoners—at least, of the white ones—is that they may soon be delivered; but the guard have often expressed their opinion that they would much prefer to be imprisoned gytas (gentlemen) like ourselves, with no work and abundance of means of subsistence, than to be poor soldiers. With all this pride, hypocrisy, ignorance, cowardice, and idleness, they have one trait which tends to eradicate any bad impression—viz., the treatment of the prisoners. If one has been so unfortunate as to have been detained in such a capacity near the King, one experiences a comparative happiness to be transferred to Magdala. The petty tyrant in the camp does his best to make one's chains as heavy as possible. It is quite different with the soldier on the Amba; with a moderate amount of politeness and amicable ness, he is to a great extent tractable; but whether the stationary life has contributed to his polish in manners, or whether the continual contact with the captives has exercised a softening influence, I am unable to say. Until the present time, the Abyssinian has been left to himself, with his limited ideas and bad education, always oppressed, and this by the very man who was only a few years back his equal. The doctrine that his property and life absolutely belong to his monarch, makes him servile and hypocritical; that this very despot, who has maltreated the representatives of those civilised powers who tried to benefit him, can do what he chooses without being ever restrained, makes him conceited. But let there be a good government, which respects even the poorest; let him be taught that the little he earns belongs exclusively to himself; give him good instruction, and instil into him sound religious principles; and with his docility, capacity, and, on the whole, equanimity of disposition, these blots in his character will soon vanish.

In reference to the second class, the prisoners, it cannot properly be said that any positive laws are laid down. Old customs have established certain rules which are generally adhered to and respected, but these may at any moment be infringed by the will and caprice of the King. In civilised countries a man must, to be liable to be put under restraint, be a convicted criminal; he must have been condemned as guilty by a legitimate and rational court, on a charge of having violated the persons or property of his fellow-men, or having become dangerous to the state. If now there is an inquiry made—a strict and impartial inquiry—as to the cause why so many persons in Magdala are restricted from taking their share in the transactions of life, it will be found that there are but a very small number who come under the category of culprits; that all the rest can show their countenance to the most punctilious and exacting, and say, without the least scruples of conscience, "Who of you convinces me of wrong?" The question remains, why are there so many prisoners? and this I must now explain.



in a river in Wales, I was delighted to see some twelve or fourteen salmon on the spawning-bed. Please recollect this was not a brook, but a moderately sized river. With considerable difficulty I managed to get the net across the river, and while so doing, to my horror, a horse came from a field opposite and walked across the ford, disturbing the salmon considerably, and sending one or two into the net. Everything being ready, I and my good friend John Lloyd, Esq., jun., of Brecon, a most energetic conservator of the river Usk, jumped into the ford, and instantly away they went, the whole shoal of salmon, down the river, and crash into the net. They came with such force into the net, and the stream was so strong, that the men holding the net on the other side called out for assistance. They managed, however, by belaying the rope round a tree, to hold on. It was perfectly impossible, we found, to drag the net to the shore. There was nothing, therefore, left but to go into the river and take the fish out one by one. I took out several salmon, which were no good to me, so let them go; and at a most terrific pace they *did* go when once loose. At length I saw a monster of a salmon in the net—a 24-pounder—and was determined to have her; so, getting her into my arms, I allowed her to kick for a while. When a little quiet and faint, I carried her to the shore in my arms like a child. My friend was there already, seated in a chair ready to receive her, with a sheet round him, in order to hold the fish without knocking her scales off. We ultimately returned her to the water, and she swam away as lively as could be. Just as I was letting her go, however, she turned round and hit me as smart a slap in the face with her tail as ever I received from a feminine—lady or fish; but I did not grumble, because I deserved it. The family of this fish, amounting to some 20,000, were all hatched out and turned into the Thames. If they are grateful fish, they will come back again. I carried them that night, starting from the station in Wales at half-past four on a winter's evening, and arriving in London the next morning at a quarter to six. I was thankful that I managed at all, as it was the night of a memorable snowstorm, which carried away all the telegraph wires, and nearly stopped the traffic on the Great Western.

Salmon require a very large "crinoline," and they are a much more delicate fish than trout to keep alive. I therefore sometimes "tether" them if I want to keep them any time. I pass a piece of thick but soft string through one of the gills, and tie it loosely, so as not to interfere with their breathing. Having found a deep hole under a bank, I then slip the fish in, and tie the other end of the string on to a bough. The fish will generally stay quiet all night, and are easily caught again the next morning. On one occasion, being hard pressed, on the Tuam river, near Galway, I put string, in form of reins, on to three salmon, and drove them more than half a mile down the river. They were, however, awkward things to drive, as they would every minute turn round and look me in the face, after the fashion peculiar to leaders of the tandems which we used to drive at Oxford. But I brought ten salmon alive, in a huge box, to Galway, by car and railway. This was about as hard a day's work as ever I went through; but we got nearly a quarter of a million salmon eggs to lay down in the troughs.

When the eggs of the salmon or trout are brought home, I treat them with the greatest possible care and attention. From about the middle of December till towards the end of January, by going to the Royal Horticultural Gardens, South Kensington, the reader will be able to examine the way in which the trout and

salmon eggs are hatched out; and my man, Neville, will be happy to show the various stages of the development of the fish. By the kindness of the French Government authorities at Huningue, I also receive a supply of French eggs. I send them British eggs in return. In this museum will also be seen many drawings and models connected with fish culture, both of the sea and rivers, and also casts of the largest specimens of oceanic fish (including a small whale and a big shark) that have been lately brought to the London market, and for the loan of which I am much indebted to the chief London fishmongers, especially Messrs. Gilson and Quelch, of Bond Street, Grove, of Charing Cross, and Charles, of Arabella Row. These casts and preparations I have made with my own hands, and entirely at my own personal expense.

## LIFE ON AMBA MAGDALA, THE STATE PRISON OF ABYSSINIA.

### II.

ABYSSINIA has for many centuries been the theatre of bloodshed and spoliation; a country where might was right. Scarcely has a certain individual, pretending to be a lineal descendant of Solomon, the King of Israel, by the Queen of Sheba, through their son Menilech, succeeded in raising himself to the throne of Ethiopia, when factions start up on every side; and the envious, and the *soi-disant* patriot, haranguing the ignorant and credulous populace on the wrongs to which their country is subject, induce them to join the standard of rebellion. The monarch becomes cruel as his power increases; he imposes an enormous tribute and kills his subjects at pleasure. The consequence is that he becomes weaker, and the most insinuating and boldest of his antagonists, by degrees more powerful, until the latter feels himself at last strong enough to offer battle to the sovereign, who of his great army having but a handful of troops remaining, must flee and die in obscurity. The usurper next wages war against those who, rebels like himself, still aspire to the crown, prevails, and places them one after another on the fortress, there to forget their ambitious dreams. These may be said to be dangerous to the State. They have been so under the old *régime*, but may, with certain privileges and immunities, prove the prop of the realm, and the strength of its owner. The high officers and braves of the defeated pretenders enter the service of the recognised monarch, who, fearing their influence and power, conveys them in chains to their former masters, to converse on by-gone happy days, and recriminate in turn.

Next, some of the oldest and most tried followers of the new King are added. They were first his equals, then his tools, and are now the shadows of his former poverty. The King's brain is turned by the dazzling height. As an old toy is spurned by a child, so these must vanish from his sight. Thus the fortresses were filled with inmates; thus Magdala was peopled.

It is a sickening sight to stand at sunrise on the gate of the jail, and see ex-princes, governors, and the great of the land, passing out of the inclosure to their respective houses—those who have been accustomed to govern large provinces in their own right—who have enjoyed every luxury which riches could procure; the gray-headed, the youth, and the boy, all march in one long file, with their heads nearly parallel with the knees. There will never be any change for them until they are laid in the grave. Others—the poor soldier, who



has fallen in disgrace; the thief, the manslayer—all these may flatter themselves with the hope that one day the fetters from their feet and the irons from their hands will be removed, and that once more they will be allowed to depart from the hated mountain. But there is no such expectation for the nobles of the realm. Their high birth has bestowed a curse upon them—it has sealed their doom. If even their present tormentor is supplanted by a new usurper, he will be guided by the same motives. "Why should he endanger part of his conquered dominion? Why should he, by releasing his hostages, sow discord and strife where quiet reigns? The peasants will transfer the love they bore the father to the son; the vassal will hail the arrival of his lord with joy, and all would be confusion and bloodshed. No; they must die in chains!" These are the sentiments which prompt every Ethiopian ruler.

There was a time when the captives were at least humanely treated. Fetters were laid around their ankles, it is true, but never heavier than was necessary to keep them from escaping, and then they were not otherwise persecuted; but at the present time not only have irons, weighing at least ten pounds, been manufactured, but an additional chain on the hand has been put; and whenever the King is in a bad temper, or the least quarrel arises which is reported to him, some new hardship is laid, not only upon those individuals who were the causes, but upon all without exception.

In May, 1865, Theodorus, on his return from his ill-fated expedition to Shoah, was very much harassed by the Galla horsemen, and arrived in great fury at Magdala. Twenty-four Galla nobles, amongst whom was the son of the now ex-Queen Workitt, the heir to the Wollo throne, who all had entered the service of Theodorus of their own free will, and whom he kept here confined as hostages, had to undergo a special measure of suffering on account of the attack of their fellow-countrymen; but the King, still in expectation that an annual tribute would be given to him, laid no violent hands on his victims then. But when, some days subsequently, Menilech, the eldest prince of the late King of Shoah, and son-in-law of Theodorus, deserted his young wife and the royal standard, and fled to the Mussulmen, the fury of his father-in-law knew no bounds. All the Mohammedans were led to the plain; the prince was informed that his mother, having found a new son, could well dispense with him, and they were butchered in the most cruel manner. Every one, the Aboona Salama publicly, and the priests and soldiers in confidence, said that since the time of Menilech such a crime—to kill prisoners, after they had been in chains in Magdala—had not been perpetrated in Habesh (Abyssinia). The fury of his heart unallayed by the blood he had shed, the King vented his rage by inflicting on all the prisoners the misery of hand-chains in addition to those around their ankles.

Besides the political prisoners, no criminals have ever been known, except under the present reign, to be sent to the fortress. They were generally transferred to the magistrates of the districts where they had violated the law, and were sentenced on the deposition of accredited witnesses to pay the damage, or in case of inability were incarcerated for a certain period, or were summarily dealt with, as by flogging; but of late years Magdala has been made the receptacle of all sorts of real and supposed malefactors. There are thieves, those having committed assaults, the manslaughterers, soldiers under royal displeasure, upwards of thirty females of the better class, the wives of deserted chiefs and their children, some boys of not more than nine years of age, a good number of Shoah soldiers to whom the imputation was made that they

intended to run away, and also very many who have not the remotest idea of their offence, and will probably never learn it. All these, about four hundred, are indiscriminately huddled together in five round houses, twenty-four feet in diameter, in one inclosure, where, after having deducted the space which the buildings occupy, there is not room enough left in any one part for three persons to walk abreast. Of all these *deha* (common herd), no account of their arrival and their crime is preserved. They are placed here and forgotten, or left until Theodorus, getting a fit of generosity, which has not been the case for the last three years, releases some of them. On such occasions he sends for them, inquires the time and cause of their confinement, and acts accordingly; but at other times, while they are being brought into his presence, he becomes annoyed at some exterior object, and, with the pious wish of "May God open you!" orders them to be taken back. There is here a man, for instance, with the name of Negusee, from Lasta, who has been a prisoner for more than five years, and for no other reason but that the soldiers when plundering discovered in the ground near his dwelling a quantity of grain, of which he had not informed them beforehand. In fact, there is no rule whatever observed in the present time. A manslaughter, according to the law of the country, could never be shut up in Magdala. A certain number of holy places—a similar institution to the cities of refuge under the Mosaic dispensation—have been reserved for him to flee to, where he must remain until the nearest of kin prefers a complaint against him. Certain authorised judges inquire into the matter, and, finding that the deceased person was not killed intentionally, they leave the relation to choose between a certain sum of money, generally a little above a hundred Maria Theresa dollars, or the death of the criminal. If the former proposal is accepted, and the manslayer is too poor to pay the required sum, he is chained hand to hand to the relative of the deceased, and both, traversing the country, beg until the money is collected; they then give it over, in the presence of the judge and other respectable witnesses, when the prisoner is set at liberty. According to the "Faeta Negest," the Abyssinian code of laws, no compromise can be entered into with a murderer: "as he has shed man's blood, so his blood must be shed by man."

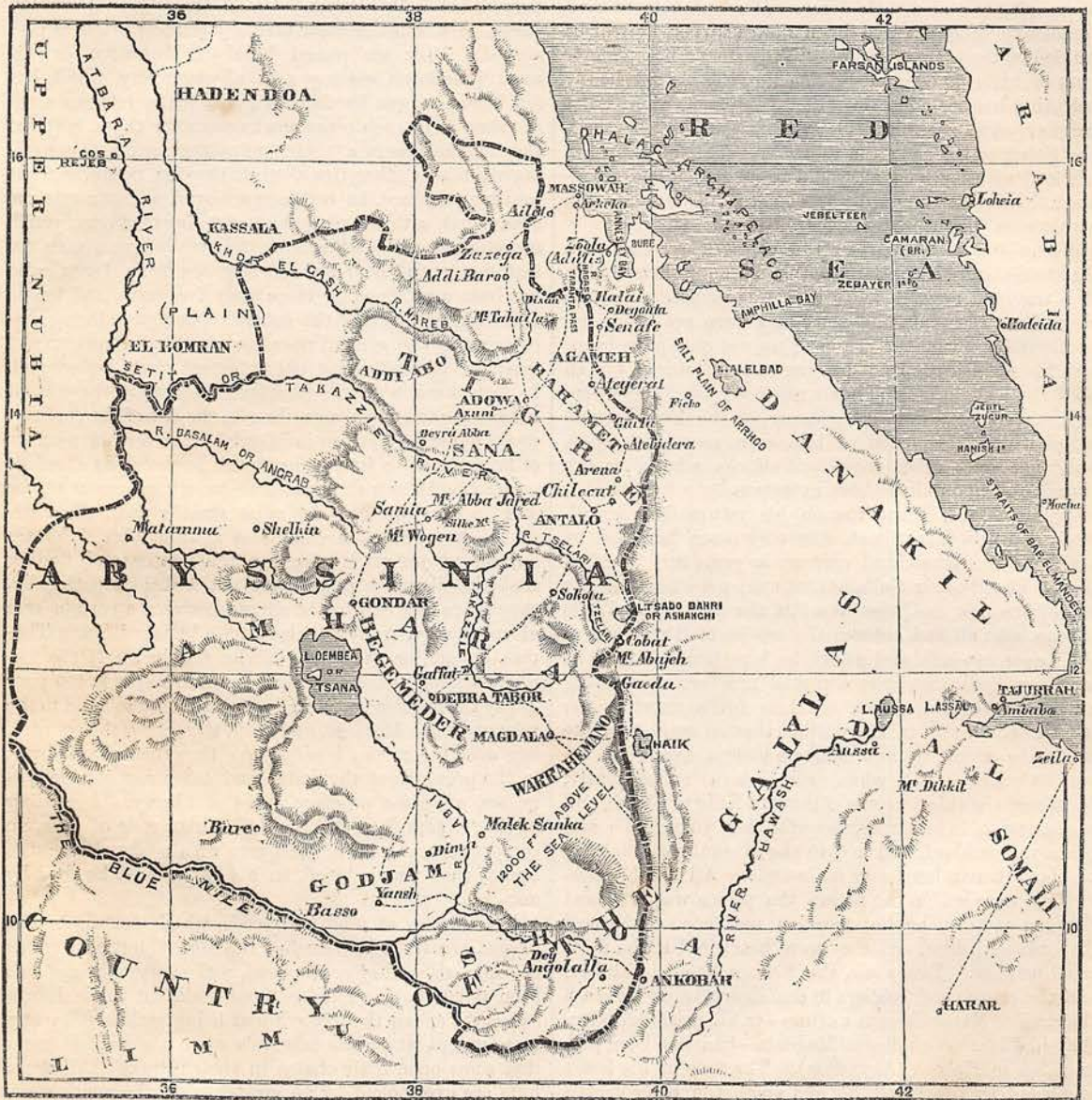
The houses of mud and reeds, which constitute the prison, are locked up during the night; but as soon as the sun rises they are opened, and every one who has been able to build a hut for himself without the inclosure can there spend the day without being molested by any man, except at certain intervals when a suspicion exists that some open their chains in their retreat. All these huts are overlooked by an eminence on the south-west, where the warders sit during the day. Besides this, for every ten prisoners, another soldier is appointed to watch, but cannot enter the abode of any without asking permission. He is responsible for his ten men, and is put in irons himself if one of them escapes, which is, however, a very rare occurrence, and very difficult indeed to accomplish. For the last four years none, except a little boy dressed in girl's clothing, has left the mountain alive; the rest either fell down from the precipice and were dashed to pieces, or were discovered in the venture and subjected to lingering sufferings. Some months ago the brother of a governor of a Tigrian district made an attempt at flight, was recaptured, mercilessly beaten, remained about two months in the stocks, and subsequently was executed.

To keep on good terms with the higher officers must never be neglected by the prisoners; for they can be annoyed in many ways; and, however just their cause



may be, they will never gain anything by complaining. If some one should venture to submit a certain matter to the King, he will too late perceive that every detail has been so altered by the defendant that the wrath of the partial monarch is sure to fall upon his own head.

plaintive sound, the cry of distress, until their small pittance is given to them. But, in order to prevent misunderstanding, I must state that a whole loaf, weighing about eight ounces, has very much the appearance of a pancake, but is not nearly as nourishing as the same




He understands but too well the import of that phrase that "a man wearing chains cannot be considered a human being, and has no right to grumble," and therefore will refrain from finding fault. Patience becomes the best policy, and, rather than resist or complain on being struck, the initiated would prefer to present the second cheek for repetition of the injury.

No rations have for some years past been given to the political prisoners, and if they did not send their servants from time to time to their respective districts to collect some money through relations and their own peasantry, they would be left to starve. The poor, however, receive within the twenty-four hours half a loaf of teff bread and some water, but are frequently compelled to raise a long

quantity of wheat bread. These four ounces of endjerah are scarcely sufficient to keep a man alive, even much less feed him; and they are compelled to increase the amount of their food in the best way they can. Several now and then obtain some employment by their richer brethren in misery, or by soldiers loitering near the prison, and thus earn a meal; others, again, are allowed to go about begging, and it must be confessed that, whatever bad qualities preponderate in the Abyssinian, lack of almsgiving is not one of them: however little he may possess himself, he invariably is ready to give a morsel to the mendicant; and the mendicant in his turn, after having finished his round, in which he generally collects sufficient for his needs, has also a bit to spare for those



who, through sickness and other causes, are hindered from performing their circuit. Nothing beyond this half loaf is ever given by the State; and, if the poor did not receive the worn-out clothes of the well-to-do, they would be in the most wretched condition, and, unless an occasional present is given to them by a relative, they have no means whatever of furnishing themselves with this necessary article. In case of sickness no doctor attends, no medicine is dispensed, no spiritual adviser approaches. They lie on the hard ground day after day, uncared-for, unpitied, and, although racked with pain and distracted by mental anguish, the chains are not removed until death has put an end to their sufferings.

Before quitting this subject I must endeavour to explain the mode and the varieties of chaining. The person to be fettered is made to sit down, and lay one leg on a stone; an iron ring, through which a chain of three links is inserted, is pulled over the foot, and while one holds another beats on it with a stone, very often eliciting cries of anguish from the victim, until it has diminished to the size of the leg immediately above the ankle. The other end of the chain is then introduced into the second ring, and the same operation is repeated with the second leg. Then the right hand is fettered in a similar manner, while the short suspended chain is fastened by means of a small ring to the foot-chain, bending the unfortunate individual to such a stooping position as actually to distort his features in walking. Sometimes to hand and foot fetters a monkoro is added. The monkoro is a piece of wood about six feet long, with something like a triangle at one extremity, like this , which is put around the neck of the prisoner. In such a case the poor man can never leave his place, unless compassionately assisted by some one carrying his heavy appendage before him. The most cruel of all the instruments of restraint are the stocks used for the refractory, and those who make an attempt at escape. A long thick beam with large holes is laid on some stones a foot high: having inserted the feet, irons are hammered around them; and the poor fellow, who cannot sit upright except when supported on his back, must remain lying in the same position for months, without ever being released for any purpose whatever. The runaway, as a rule, when taken out of the stocks is led to execution.

Thus it will be seen that the prisoners occasion to the State very few expenses, and that the prison system of the present time is as cruel and merciless as it possibly can be amongst the most savage nations. I believe that the words of David (Psalm lxxiv. 20), "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty," can nowhere be employed more appropriately.

Since November, 1864, Magdala has been invested with quite a novel character. The Emperor Theodorus, who, in spite of his pompous name, is not more civilised, but perhaps more cunning and certainly more cruel than any of his people, had attained to the summit of Abyssinian glory. He had conquered the most remote provinces, had an immense army at his back, was feared and admired by distant tribes; and, endowed with a good deal of superstition, began to persuade himself, as his subjects had been taught to believe, that by virtue of his adopted name he had become the Theodorus of Abyssinian prophecy, in whose reign felicity and peace should be enjoyed, the conqueror and regenerator of mankind. This pride, which knew no bounds at this period, he deemed had been impugned by high authorities, and he revenged the imagined insult upon those individuals whom he had in his grasp. He chained them in October, 1863, and the following months, tortured and tormented them in various ways, and, after having dragged them

bound two and two together in fetters across mountains and plains, on dangerous roads, a distance of about fifteen days, given over to the tender mercies of the rude soldiery, insulted and harassed at every step, he deposited them in Magdala—I speak of the Europeans. Before this event Theodorus had forcibly detained the Egyptian commissioner three years, had incarcerated "the successor of St. Mark," his visitor, as also his own bishop, and chained the French consul. These arguments were too convincing to the half-savage military. The King had demonstrated to his servants that he is not afraid of the mightiest monarchs of the earth, and had the satisfaction of hearing night after night his courage praised in song, and himself exalted as the vicegerent of the Deity.

Arrived here, we (the Europeans) were treated a degree worse than the lowest criminals. While the latter had a small space assigned to them in one of the houses wherein to seek shelter from the sun by day and the cold at night, we were left in the open air to shift for ourselves as well as we could, not the least consideration being taken of a lady and a young child; and it was only after the lapse of some days that we were allowed to pitch a tent or fasten a piece of cloth under the awning of the roof, wherein we dwelt for the next fifteen months. Seven months we were here in foot-chains, and in the eighth a hand-chain was added. It is true we were not anxious to be driven into one of the houses; for, although to the native no great hardship, it is a trial of no ordinary character to the European, which we had to experience several nights on a subsequent occasion. A cubit (foot and a half) of room was allotted to each of us; but, when our coloured neighbours took their places, we were pushed so much, as to be compelled, since we could not fight, to sit cowering together and watch for the dawn of day; and, when the doors were unbolted at last, we made a rush to change our scanty linen as quickly as possible. During the day we were stared at by the curious like so many wild beasts in the Zoological Gardens; but, while the latter are generally admired on account of their strength, size, beauty, or ferocity, we were criticised on the opposite principle, as having "hair like monkeys, eyes like cats, complexion like milk," etc.; and it was only after several of us began to speak Amharic that we heard the naïve remark, that, "although they do not resemble, yet they are human beings in reality." If we had had the power, as it was imputed to us, of coining dollars to an unlimited extent without any materials, or, in other words, by alchemical processes, we might have had every comfort possible for such a position; but, as we had no friends, and not over-much cash, we had to swallow every abuse until the novelty had died away.

But when we were conveyed hither with the members of the English mission as the king's "friends," in July, 1866, to be chained, our treatment was entirely different from what it was the first time. Although Europeans are so dull as not to understand such kind of amity, yet, on account of the benefits derived from it, we know how to appreciate it. It is one thing to have a house for one's self, or, at least, one for two persons, and to be attended by one's servants, living in the same inclosure, and who can be had when required; and another thing to be obliged to live amongst every sort of filth, and to wait till it pleases the careless Abyssinian to inquire after his master's wants. We therefore make the best of our opportunities; for we do not know what a day, nay, what an hour may bring forth. Several of us write or study languages from the scanty store, or rather wreck, of our books; some fill up



their time with gardening and physical labour; and others find the best occupation in sleeping and paying of visits. The native dignitaries are very polite, more especially to the members of the mission; to them they pay almost a daily visit of some length—for love's sake, it is said; but some individuals, who do not think very highly of the affection of Abyssinians, are inclined to believe that the liberal entertainment and the powers of conversation of Mr. Rassam are the principal means of attraction. As soon as we are informed of their approach, our books, papers, inkstand, in fact, every article creating suspicion, having been removed out of view, we await them at the door of our rooms, with the fervent wish that they might very soon find their way back to the quarter of the great. After a good deal of bowing on our part, and many repeated inquiries after our health on the part of our visitors, with just as many assurances from our lips that all is satisfactory, we are very happy to get rid of them in order to resume our work. I must let out the secret that most of our illustrious guests with high-sounding titles are of very low origin, and that their elevation is not due to merit. They are the creatures of Theodorus. He has annihilated or imprisoned the great, and made small men big.

But whenever there is a report that a royal messenger has arrived, we are not content with laying our writing materials aside: we must find a safer hiding-place. The pockets of coats or waistcoats are hurriedly searched, and every scrap of paper is examined and destroyed. Those, however, which are destined to make a sea voyage are either secreted in the straw of the roof, or thrust in a hollow stick, or secured in a bottle buried in the ground, or are quickly despatched to the dwelling of a native friend, who takes care of them, until we know by the next advent of the chiefs whether the state of things will remain unaltered for a little while longer, or whether "friendship" has ceased to exist, and persecution has commenced. Thus we live on in continual fear and anxiety, sustained, however, by the hope that ere long the hour of deliverance and reunion will strike, when the husband will embrace his wife, the father his children, and when friend with friend will magnify the goodness of God.

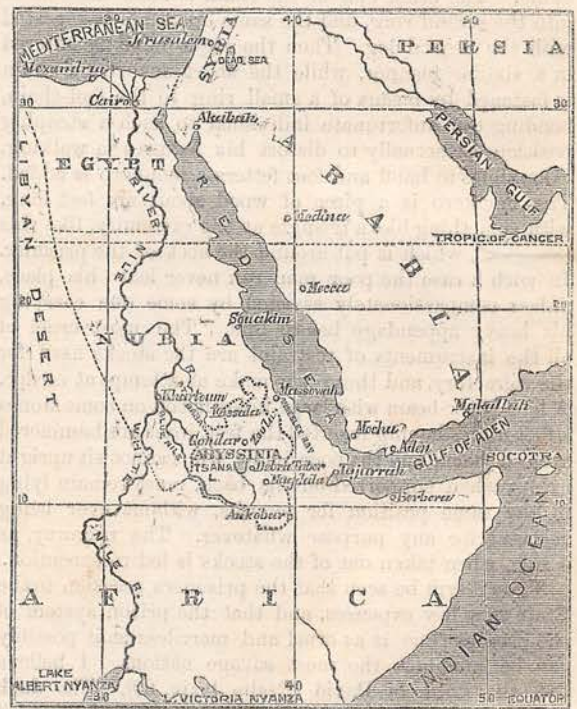
I am afraid I have transgressed already on the patience of the reader, but before concluding I must make a few brief remarks in reference to two classes of captives varying from all the rest—the first, the Abunah (bishop), and the Etcheghe (chief prior of the monks). They are without chains, but guarded by soldiers. The former has for some years past been at perpetual enmity with the King; and, although the most influential personage after him in the country, he is not so highly thought of at present as his predecessor; but as soon as a change of government ensues he will again possess unlimited authority, and every aspirant to the throne will be only too glad to obey the behest of Abunah (or Aboona) Salama.

The last which I mention are not generally considered, but are in the fullest sense of the word prisoners—I mean the women confined in the hareem, or elfin as it is called here—the wives and concubines of him who can scarcely any more be called ruler, and the "confiscated" wives of some political prisoners who offered any attraction to the royal connoisseur. Their life is monotonous enough. Shut up in a house, guarded by peevish warders, never allowed to see either mother or sister, they are periodically taken to their master, travelling at night, while another batch is sent back; that is to say, when the roads are not blocked up. At this moment

the women, as well as all other prisoners, are agreed in this particular, that they never any more wish to see the face of that cruel individual who has slaughtered monthly, without exaggeration, his thousands around him, and has converted that part of the country where he is closed in by the rebels into a large charnel-house.

#### ABYSSINIAN NOTES.

THE map on a previous page has been copied from the route-map prepared by the Government for the use of the officers of the Expedition, with additions from the most recent and best authorities. It will enable our readers to follow more clearly the despatches and letters on Abyssinian affairs. The smaller map shows the position of Abyssinia in relation to surrounding geography. Under the heading of Abyssinian Notes will be published such miscellaneous information as will help to give a fair idea of the country and its people.



#### BOOKS ABOUT ABYSSINIA.

An article in the "Quarterly Review" for October thus commenced: "Not many months ago Abyssinia was to the generality of Englishmen *terra incognita*. None, save a few geographers, the readers of Bruce's travels, some missionaries and relatives of the unhappy prisoners at Magdala, knew or cared to know much about that part of the world." There was some truth in this statement, but at the same time it is both strange and true that more has been written about Abyssinia than about almost any other country of the same size in the world. In the latest and most convenient handbook on the subject\* there is printed in an appendix a list of above two hundred books and tracts on Abyssinia in various European languages! Besides these, there are so many papers and articles in various encyclopedias and dictionaries, in transactions of scientific societies, and in missionary reports, that Sir Henry Rawlinson was justified in saying at a scientific meeting that "it was a mistake to say but little was known about Abyssinia; of few countries do we know so much." At the

\* "Abyssinia and its People." Edited by John Camden Hotten. J. C. Hotten, London.