

Cook = // Anthony Chert-s, 1826-190.

# ROUTES

ix

# ABYSSINIA.

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*Presented to the House of Commons, in pursuance of their Address dated  
November 26, 1867.*

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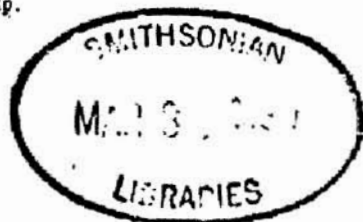
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plentiful in the jungle, kindled a fire, and prepared to cook the game we had shot in the morning.

Our game proved excellent, and we remained quiet to digest it till between three and four o'clock in the afternoon. We then remounted, and continued our journey without any adventure till nightfall, when we arrived at our destination.

The village of Ailat, which is composed of many scattered huts built of a framework of wood filled in with branches of trees, straw, &c., and thatched, is situated on the edge of a large sandy plain, covered with bushes, and surrounded by hills of no great size. No country in the world could be better adapted for covering game, and none could be better stocked than it is. One cannot go a hundred yards from the houses without seeing something. In the morning one is awakened by the distant cry of the guinea-fowl as it leaves its perch on the trees. Grouse, partridges, wild boar, gazelle, and antelopes of every size and description, abound in the immediate neighbourhood; while elephants, rhinoceros, ostriches, and sometimes giraffe, are in the proper season found a little further off, and beasts of prey are everywhere to be met with. The hot spring, which is situated at some distance from the village, is considered to be a favourite haunt of the lion.

The inhabitants of Ailat are Bedouins of the Bellaw tribe, which occupies all the tract of country lying about Arkeeko, and thence to the neighbourhood of Ailat.

I remained some weeks longer at Ailat, shooting and collecting specimens of natural history, till a letter from Mr. Plowden (whom I imagined to be at Adowa) reached me from Kiaquor, a village about three days' journey from Ailat, where, as he informed me, he lay in a state of great weakness from the effects of a severe fever, which both he and his companion, Mr. Bell, had contracted during their stay at Massawa.

Having little preparation to make, we were afoot the next morning long before the sun was up, and when he arose we were some way advanced on our road, with our backs turned to him. The plain which we had to cross before arriving at the hills literally teemed with guinea-fowl, which at that early hour appeared unwilling to quit their roosting-places on the trees; and when, as we approached them, they did condescend to budge, they collected on the ground in coveys of some hundreds each. The road, as we advanced, became more and more rough and difficult, till at last we found ourselves ascending and descending almost perpendicular hills, covered with large, round, loose pebbles, and well garnished with the usual proportion of thorny trees, neither of which, as may be imagined, contributed to the comfort of a barefooted pedestrian in one of the hottest climates of the world.

We proceeded in this way for nearly two hours, when we arrived at the top of the hill. The country, it must be admitted, had its redeeming qualities; for the scenery, though rough and wild in the extreme, was not devoid of interest. Here the guide gave us the welcome news that water (the first we had met with that was drinkable since our departure from Ailat) was to be found in the valley below us.

We set off at once for the water, which we reached in about a quarter of an hour, and were agreeably surprised on finding a magnificent stream dashing down between two cliffs, which, overhanging it at a few yards only one from the other, shaded its course as it fell from rock to rock in cascades, each of which had, by centuries of perseverance, hollowed out of the hard stone a basin for its waters to repose in. Some of these cavities were very large, and of considerable depth;

slid down all the hills, and stumbled or tumbled over all the inequalities of the plain. My attention being thus occupied, and the rain driving in my face, I had not leisure to enjoy a distant view of the city we were approaching; nor could I, till within a short distance of it, see enough to enable me to determine whether Adoua was built in the Grecian or Moorish taste. I own I rather expected to see columns or obelisks, if not an acropolis on some of the neighbouring hills. Judge then of my astonishment when, on arriving at this great city, the capital of one of the most powerful kingdoms of *Æthiopia*, I found nothing but a large straggling village of huts, some flat-roofed, but mostly thatched with straw, and the walls of all of them built of rough stones, laid together with mud, in the rudest possible manner. Being wet, moreover, with the rain, the place presented the most miserably dirty appearance. Before entering the town we had to cross a brook, and to scramble up a steep bank.

We started, a few days after, in the direction of the camp, then at Howzayn. Our first day's journey did not advance us far on our way, for we had scarcely been an hour on the road, when, while halting in a shady place to rest Plowden, (who was still a great sufferer,) I was suddenly seized with a fainting fit, and was in consequence carried into a neighbouring house.

Early on the following morning we again started, and, after descending the precipitous rock which forms the natural boundary of the province called Dabba Garema, we passed the village of Guddiba, and finally entered the district called Assa. Here we were obliged to halt in the middle of the road, Plowden's fever having returned very severely, and there being no house within three or four miles; but in a few hours he felt so far better as to enable us to continue our journey, and we succeeded in carrying him to the summit of a hill, on which is situated a village called Addy Nefas (the Village of Wind, so called from its elevated position), where an uncle of one of our servants resided. The road up to it was exceedingly difficult, both from its roughness and steepness; but the fatigue we endured in the ascent was amply repaid by the kindness and hospitality with which we were received on our arrival. Honey, milk, eggs, and various other good things were speedily offered us, and we gladly consented to remain there the night, although we might have gone several miles farther, the day not being nearly closed. Towards the evening of the following day we reached a village of Ha Haily, called Devra Berbery, the people of which, having already suffered great annoyance from the frequent stragglers to and from the camp, were much inclined to treat us inhospitably.

Next morning the elders of the village, having, it would appear, formed a better opinion of us than they did on our first arrival, sent two boys to show us the road, as not far onward was a deep gap or ravine, which might be crossed by a foot passenger in a few minutes, while the mules could only arrive by a long détour. The path, in fact, which we followed was so steep and slippery down the face of the rock, that we were obliged in some places to slide down in a sitting posture.

After a short time we arrived at another small hamlet belonging to the same district as the village where we had slept the previous night.

Our next day's journey brought us to a small village called Addy Argoud. We passed a very uncomfortable night at Addy Argoud. The pouring rain obliged us to sleep in the hut, which we seldom did when the weather permitted us to remain outside.

On the following day we passed the mountain of Haramat, one

of the strongest fortresses in Tigrè, now occupied by a rebel and brigand of the name of Iskyas. A former viceroy (I believe Ras Welda Selassy) is said to have laid siege to the mountain, and, unable to take it by storm, blockaded it for seven years. Mountains almost impregnable by nature are common in this country. Many are in the hands of priests, who have on their summits a monastery and sanctuary, such as Devra Damo, and many others; and to these the people of the neighbouring provinces send their property for safety in times of war or other disturbances. Almost every great chieftain has likewise his mountain, to which he retires in a moment of need. Cisterns, either natural or artificially hollowed, are on the summit of each, and large supplies of provisions are generally kept ready for any emergency. Many of these rocks cannot be ascended except by the aid of cords or rope ladders, which are let down and drawn up at pleasure. Numerous amusing anecdotes are related of the stratagems employed by some of the more powerful chiefs to get possession of some of these mountain fastnesses.

Towards the afternoon we arrived, in a heavy shower of rain, at the camp of Howzayn, and proceeded immediately to the dwelling of Bejerundy Cäfty, the "Ikkabeyt" or steward of the Prince's household, who was appointed by his Highness as Bell's "balderabba," or introducer, when he visited this country on a former occasion.

The appearance of an Abyssinian permanent camp is singular, but by no means unpleasing. The diversity of tents—some bell-shaped, some square, like an English marquee; some white, and others of the black woollen stuff made principally in the southern provinces of Tigrè; huts of all sizes and colours, and their inmates scattered about in groups, with their horses, mules, &c., form altogether a picturesque and very lively scene. In the centre is the dwelling of Oubi, which consists of three or four large thatched wigwams and a tent, enclosed by a double fence of thorns, at the entrances through which guards are stationed, the space between them being divided into courts, in which the soldiers or other persons craving an audience of the King await his pleasure. Close around this is the encampment of the "Ikkabeyt," or steward, and his "Chiffra," or followers, of whom he has a large body, used as porters in case of the Prince's changing quarters, and as soldiers in time of war. Around these again encamp the "Zeveynia," or guards. In front of these come the "Nefteynia," or bearers of fire-arms, with the "Negarit," or great drums, while "Fit-Owrraris," or generals of advance guard, occupy the front position. [I don't know the derivation of "Fit-Owrraris." May it not be from "Fit," face or front, and "Ow-rari," Rhinoceros, alluding to the offensive weapons of that animal, which are so prominent in front of his face?]

Behind the Prince's tent is the camp of the "Sheff Zaggy," or swordbearers, while the "Dejgin," or rear guard, occupies the hindmost position. On each side of the royal abode are the great men, or chiefs of provinces who may have joined their master with their forces. Every corps of about fifty soldiers has an officer, called a "Hallika." His hut is rather larger than those of his followers, and is built in the centre, while they encamp in a circle around him. The "Hallika" is generally a favourite servant, whether he be in the employment of a Prince or that of any other chieftain; and when his master is levying fresh soldiers, every volunteer for service demanding a "balderabba," a favourite servant is named for this office, and in this way his "Chiffra" or company is formed, he becoming "Hallika" to those volunteers to whom he is thus appointed "balderabba." As "Hallika" he receives and distributes the pay and allowances of his "Chiffra." The only

Fifth day. Seven hours.

*Segonets*.—On the edge of the Ethiopian plateau; the second part of the route is made on a lower level; several unimportant brooks are crossed.

Sixth day. Nine hours.

*Bihate*.—Through an arid and desert country.

Seventh day. Seven hours.

*Addigrate*.—A higher elevation is reached, rich in pasture. Addigrate is the capital of Agamé.

Eighth day. Six hours.

*Agoddi*.—Through a low country, at first rich and fertile, then dry and destitute of vegetation.

Ninth day. Eight hours.

*Atebi*.—Over elevated plateaux, where barley is the only cereal cultivated.

#### 4. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO ANTALO.

Atebi is reached in nine days. (See previous route.)

Tenth day. Four hours.

*Aikamessal*.—Following the course of the brook Alecti which further on is increased by receiving the waters of the Province of Onomberta, and takes the name of the River Agoula. Aikamessal is one of the points by which the caravans descend to the plain of salt.

Eleventh day. Six hours.

*Dessa*.—Over a tolerably fertile plateau, but thinly inhabited. Dessa is also an assembling point from which caravans descend to the plain of salt.

Twelfth day. Five hours.

*Kouchaine-Tcheleukot*.—Continuation of the same plateau.

Thirteenth day. Six hours.

*Antalo*.—The two little rivers Guembéla and Antabate are crossed. Country inhabited and covered with cultivation.

#### 5. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO ABI-ADDI.

Seventh day. Adowa.

Eighth day. Six hours.

*Zoungui*.—Through an uneven country belonging to the Kollas (low country).

Ninth day. Eight hours.

*Meretta*.—The first part of the road is almost a desert and nothing but some groups of mimosas are seen. The river Ouéri is crossed, shut in between deep banks; the country assumes a less desolate aspect on approaching Meretta, of which the position is very picturesque and surrounded by numerous hamlets.

Tenth day. Six hours.

*Abi-Addi*.—Through a country thickly inhabited and frequented by a great number of merchants who trade in salt with Abi-Addi. This town serves as a dépôt for this article for the provinces of Sémién.

#### 6. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO AREZA.

The three first days are employed in traversing the Choho country.

Third day. Seventeen hours.

*Ouaky*.—First station on the Ethiopian plateau.

Fourth, fifth, and sixth days. Eighteen hours.

*Aréza*.—Through low country, furrowed by numerous ravines. Aréza is in the middle of the great hunting-grounds for the elephant, rhinoceros and buffalo.

#### 7. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO DEBAB GOUNA.

Seventh day.

*Adoua*.

Eighth day. Four hours.

*Azoum*.—Almost always across a plain; country rich and fertile, principally cultivated with theff and corn. With the exception of some hills the country is entirely level.

Ninth day. Six hours.

*Tamboukh*.—The brook *Maye-Tchout* is crossed, which waters fine prairies and fields of theff; from thence the hills of *Akabsiré* are reached; behind which is the valley of *Guerzela*; after having crossed them a descent is made into the valley of *Tamboukh*.

Tenth day. Four hours.

*Belasse*.—After passing the fine prairies of *Selenloah*, a little chain is passed which borders the plain of *Chiré* on the north, and the district of *Belasse* is entered.

Eleventh day. Eight hours.

*Maye-Témène*.—Through a plain. Country of cereals and pastures.

Twelfth day. Six hours.

*Debabgouna*.—Through a plain, the same as the preceding.

#### 8. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO EGUELA-GOURA.

Fourth day.

*Kayé-Kor*.—First station on the plateau.

Fifth day. Three hours.

*Eguela-Goura*.—On leaving *Kayé-Kor* a steep ascent is made; but the rest of the route is through a plain, formed of fields of cereals and a small number of meadows.

#### 9. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO FICHO AND THE SALT PLAIN.

Ninth day.

*Atebi*.—(See the route from Messoah to Atebi).

Tenth day. Three hours.

*Assote*.—Road through a plain.

Eleventh day. Three hours.

On leaving *Assote* the eastern slope of the Ethiopian plateau is descended by a very steep road.

Twelfth day. Four hours.

*Wells of Saba*.—Through the bed of a torrent strewed with rolled flints.

Thirteenth day. Eight hours.

*Mankel-Kelié*.—A slope is descended, and a vast plain, for a great part desert, is entered. Near *Mankel-Kelié* are some cultivated spots and a few scattered huts inhabited by the *Taltal* tribe of *Borôme*.

Fourteenth day. Nine hours.

*Gara*.—The road descends sensibly, and soon there is nothing but a burning desert without any species of vegetation. The halt is made near the spring of Gara, from which the water issues boiling.

#### 10. SECOND ROUTE.

Ficho may be reached by a much shorter line through valleys from the shore; for the Salt Lake is only at a very short distance from the coast; but this route is only practicable for natives of the country.

#### 11. FIRST ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO ADDI-ABO.

Eighth day.

*Azoum*.—(See the itinerary from Messoah to Debagouna).

Ninth day.

*Maye-Touaro*.—This town is at the extremity of the valley of Tam-bouhh, at the place where it debouches into the plain of Selenoah.

Tenth day.

*Medebayetaber*.—Country hilly and generally wooded, with numerous ravines, and a great number of brooks, which fall into the River Mareb.

Eleventh day.

*Kayé-Beit*.—Low country, well wooded. It is difficult to travel without a guide in this country.

Twelfth day.

*Addi-Abô*.—On approaching Addi-Abô, a great number of villages and well cultivated fields are met. Nevertheless a part of the population devotes itself to hunting which is very productive.

#### 12. SECOND ROUTE.

On leaving Maye-Touaro a road may be followed by the hills of Koyeta and the district of Addi-Onfite, and on the fourth day Addi-Abô is reached. The people met with on this road are more hospitable than those of the districts of Medebaye Taber and Kayé-Beit.

#### 13. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO AOSSEBA.

Twelfth day.

*Kouihaine-Tcheleukot*.—(See the route from Messoah to Antalo).

Thirteenth day.

*Aosseba*.—The country traversed consists of plateaux rich in pasture and cereals. Aosseba is on the southern frontier of Enderta; the inhabitants have frequent relations with the Taltals and Gallas, from whom they buy ivory and some rhinoceros horns.

#### 14. ROUTE FROM MESSOAH TO ASSAKELTI.

Thirteenth day.

*Antalo*.—(See the route from Messoah to Antalo).

Fourteenth day. Four hours.

*Addirake*.—The plain of Antalo and the River Bouillé is traversed;