WITH THE ABYSSINIANS AGAINST THE MULLAH.1

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On September 26, 1903, Capt. H. N. Dunn and I reported ourselves at the office of the D. G., A.M.S., and were informed by the D. D. G., Surg.-Gen. Keogh, that an Abyssinian contingent was to co-operate with the Somaliland Expeditionary Force against the Mullah, and that King Menelik had asked for the services of two British medical officers. Our luck in being selected for the posts was only equalled by our delight at the prospect of going. We had both served in the Egyptian Army, and five and four years, respectively, in the Sudan. Our thanks are due to Lieut.-Col. Bussell, R.A.M.C., and to Mr. Barnes, for their valuable assistance in drawing up the lists of the medical and surgical materials which we were each required to take with us, and of the reserve stores, which it was arranged could be ordered at any time by wire. It is not necessary, in this place, to give full details of these, but in the course of the notes various suggestions and criticisms will be made. Later in the day we were informed that our passages to Aden had been booked on the P. and O. s.s. "Britannia" for October 2, that the Senior Naval Transport Officer at Aden would arrange for our further passage by the most expeditious route, and that an advance to us had been authorised of thirty days' pay and ninety-one days' field allowance, together with an imprest of £100 to meet any expenses to which we might be put in connection with our service in Abyssinia, and for which we were to render an account to the Field Controller of the Somaliland Field Force. Whilst employed on this special duty we were to be entitled to a personal allowance of 10s. per day on board ship and £1 a day in Abyssinia, in addition to the regimental pay of our rank, this to be inclusive of all army allowances, including subsistence.

We were required to take complete camp, field and hospital equipment, together with four months' provisions. On September 29, we had the advantage of an interview in London with Lieut.-Col. J. Lane Harrington, C.V.O., C.B., H.B.M's. Agent and Consul-General at Adis Ababa, who told us everything and furnished us

1 Arranged for publication by Christopher Addison, M.D., B.S.Lond., F.R.C.S., Lecturer on Anatomy, Charing Cross Hospital Medical School.
with his invaluable "General Notes on Outfit, Transport, &c., for Abyssinia." It would take too long to give a complete list of the stores taken, and here again we must content ourselves with comments by the way.

For big game I took a Rigby double-barrel, special reflex .450 rifle, 10½ lbs. weight, with indiarubber butt plate, 28 in. barrel, and carrying a solid nickel covered bullet of 480 grs., a .303 Mauser Metford for small game and a 12-bore double-barrel shot gun.

We were originally instructed to purchase at Aden such stores as potatoes, onions, biscuits, tea, sugar, tinned milk, ghee (native butter), candles, soap, &c., but on arrival there we received a wire from Col. A. N. Rochfort, C.B., R.H.A., who was to command the force, to the effect that most of them could be obtained at Harrar, so that the number of things we each had to buy at, and transport from, Aden was much less than anticipated; they were, precisely, six canvas water bottles, three canvas water buckets, two candle-stick lamps, with two extra globes for the same, three tins of Keating's powder, two two-pound tins of lard, two packets of salt, four tins of arrowroot, two tins of hops, one pound of lump alum, two packing needles and ball of English twine, six bottles of lime juice—strong, and five packets of candles.

My warm thanks are due to Capt. A. Duff, 3rd Gordon Highlanders, in giving me details of the arrangements and distribution of supplies, especially for the native servants. The syce (groom) and the tent boy were engaged for us at Aden by Messrs. Cowasjee Dinshaw Bros.

We joined the P. and O. s.s. "Britannia" at Marseilles on October 9, and reached Port Said on the 13th, when we were joined by Mr. J. L. Baird, Diplomatic Service. We received a wire there saying that the Mullah had broken south near Obbia—a false alarm we hoped. Our table on board was made up as follows: Gen. Sir A. Hunter, Capt. A. Duff, Capt. H. N. Dunn, Mr. J. L. Baird, Capt. Lord George Murray (Black Watch), A.D.C. to General Hunter, Lieut. Ogilvy, R.E., and myself. Duff, Dunn, Baird, Ogilvy and I were all on our way to be attached to the Abyssinian Army. At Port Said Gen. Sir A. Hunter wired his salaams to the Sirdar, in which he was good enough, on his own suggestion, to include Dunn's name and mine. He received the following reply: 'To General Sir Archibald Hunter, s.s. 'Britannia.' Very many thanks for kind telegram. Your old comrades of the Egyptian Army wish you, Jennings and Dunn every success and prosperity. Bon voyage and best of luck from us all.'
On disembarking at Aden, at 8 a.m. on the 19th, we found the following wire from Colonel Bochfort: "Please leave medical stores, surplus to your probable requirements, at Aden. Tents are unnecessary, as I can supply light Abyssinian tent for inspection of sick. I can supply five colonial-pattern mule saddles for officers." On going through our belongings afterwards on the wharf it was found that my two rifles and the gun had not been put ashore, and it turned out afterwards that they, with some other things of Dunn's and Ogilvy's, had been transhipped to the s.s. "Orient," bound for Bombay.¹

No regular boat left Aden for Djibouti before the 22nd, so we received authority to charter Messrs. Cowasjee Dinshaw's s.s. "Falcon," which was leaving for Berbera on the night of our arrival, and would take us on from there to Djibouti for Rs. 300, and Rs. 5 extra for each servant. On Duff's advice I provided myself with 100 Maria Teresa dollars for use in Abyssinia, at a cost of Rs. 141·8. We arrived at Berbera on the 20th, went ashore in dhows, paid our respects to the Commandant (Major Rawlins), and dined, by invitation, at the Base Hospital, Major Gee, I.M.S., in command. The Somaliland Field Force, including all arms—British, Indians, and Somali levies—roughly numbered 6,000 fighting men, and about 18,000 all told, including coolies, &c., with two General Hospitals of 300 and 200 beds respectively, two British and three Indian Field Hospitals, as well as two additional sections of British Field Hospitals, of which fuller details later. There were many bad cases of scurvy in camp, especially among the Bombay native troops. The camp lay to the west of the jetty, or ramp, and the native town of Berbera to the east. Beside the first stonework wharf is a bamboo-built pier of flimsy construction. The whole place was a hive of industry, and the word wonderful hardly expresses the harmony of its working. The conglomeration of British and Indian soldiers, native levies, camp followers, camels, mules, ponies, donkeys, sheep, mule wagons, pony carts, camel carts and the rest, formed a bewildering picture of colour and activity. Big ships were discharging into lighters and dhows, thousands of natives of all sorts and colours, laden with cargo, were buzzing and humming like so many bees, or they were working like ants, rather, at giant ant-hills of compressed forage and sacks of oats, going and coming, passing and repassing, hurrying on and returning, they

¹ A message was received at Harrar, October 29, 1903, that the packages had been found, were due at Aden on that date, and would be forwarded immediately.
seemed like streams of corpuscles in arterial and venous currents moving in response to some unseen systole and diastole. Whilst we were ashore the report came in that a British officer had been mauled by a panther at Bulhar, and Capt. J. W. Little, I.M.S., was ordered to proceed there on our boat to tend him. We left Berbera at midnight on the 20th, and arrived opposite Djibouti at 8 p.m. on the 21st. Nobody on board properly knew the entrance. However, we got through in the end right enough, and landed in the morning at eight o’clock.

The trains leave Djibouti for the railhead thrice weekly, and, as one had left the morning of our arrival, we had to wait until the 25th. Djibouti is far ahead of Berbera. By means of its 190 miles or so of railway it has snatched up a lot of the Berbera trade. We stayed at the Hotel des Arcades, a three-storied building. Our bedrooms were on the first floor and were approached by two flights of stairs, which it was as well to negotiate for the first time in daylight, seeing that no two steps were alike.

On the afternoon following our arrival we called en troupe on the Governor, M. Dubarry, and accepted an invitation to dinner on the morrow. The European quarter of the town lies on a promontory but little above sea-level, with the sea lapping nearly all round. The native quarter is situated behind the European, and is barely above high-water level, indeed the ground there is regularly inundated in many places at high tide. It consists of rudely-constructed huts of mats, rags, sticks, dried grass, mud, &c. Dried sticks for firewood, which is as scarce here as it is in many places inland, dates and grain, constitute the chief merchandise. The sanitary arrangements are of a prehistoric sort, and it is certain, that were it not for the sun, that best of all sterilisers, the place would soon be unfit for human habitation. The market of the European town overlooks the native quarter from a height of from 10 to 15 feet. There were wooden shelters with fish and meat exposed for sale—exposed, that is, so far as they could be seen for the flies. There were other stalls on which were chiefly carrots, potatoes, grain, and a few melons. In the centre of the town is the square, “Place Menelik,” the sides of which are mostly made up of shops belonging to the ubiquitous and indispensable Greek and containing every conceivable article of merchandise. There is a splendid road—a perfect bicycle tract, though a short one—with standard oil lamps along it about fifty yards apart, and a low wall on either side, leading from the town over a bridge which spans a little inlet of the sea, to the railway station. It is
made of madrepore coral, crushed and rolled. This part of Djibouti is generally a smart, clean little town; many of the houses are good and well built, particularly the Governor's, which was, I think, one of the best houses I had seen since leaving Suez. The drinking water comes from about five miles inland, and is pumped up and stored in reservoirs hewn out of the rock. None of us had time to visit the site, but M. E. Bastianelle, Agent for the Compagnie de l'Afrique Orientale, told me that the supply is practically unlimited, although it depends upon the amount of rainfall. He said there were no natural springs, and the collection of water is the result of percolation of the rain-water through the soil. It has a saltish taste owing to the presence of salts in solution, said to be magnesia. It is brought to the town in iron pipes and rises to the first storey level of the town houses; 67,200 gallons are delivered daily.

Beggars clamouring for baksheesh are as plentiful in Djibouti as elsewhere, and they are peculiarly frank in one respect. If their importunities are not rewarded they, thinking their appeal is not understood, exhibit an open hand half full of small change and point to it with the other. They seemed to wonder that the simple European should go away regardless, suspecting that they were not quite so poor as "by Allah!" they said they were.

We much appreciated the kindly hospitality of M. and Madame Dubarry and we did good justice to the generous fare. After dinner M. Dubarry made us a happy and most friendly speech, to which "Diplomaticus" (Baird) replied in his very best style. We met there M. de Carlan, Secretary to the Governor, Madame de Carlan and M. Bastianelle.

Our hotel accounts for the three days and nights, exclusive of tips, amounted to 40 frs. each. The cost of transport from Djibouti to railhead is £18 10s. per ton, and my lot of twenty-nine articles, comprising camp, hospital and field equipment, four months' rations and private baggage, weighed 14'77 cwt., and cost £13 13s. 3d. We had four dogs amongst us, which cost 10s. each.

The railway is a metre gauge, steel rails, iron sleepers and there were iron telegraph poles carrying two wires on the left-hand side going from Djibouti. Our train consisted of an engine, guard's van, 4 open trucks, one 3rd class, and two 1st and 2nd class combined carriages. As giving an indication of the amount of rolling and general stock in use on the line, it may be convenient to give a list of what was noticed at various places, excluding what constituted our train. The list, however, may not be complete, as two or three short naps occurred on the journey.
First, at Djibouti: 5 engines—3 working and 2 in a shed apparently undergoing repairs, 19 open and 13 covered trucks, 4 trolleys and 3 carriages (1st and 2nd class) with combined couplings and buffers. There were also two workshops and one large storage shed, about 15 by 30 metres. (2) At Daonauli: 1 shunting engine, 14 open and 1 covered truck, piles of iron sleepers and rails, and a crane on a travelling carriage. (3) At Mellow: 27 open trucks, 2 hand trolleys, 2 trucks fitted with cylindrical water-tanks, quantities of iron sleepers, rails, and trolley wheels on axles. At Dire Daouw (railhead): 2 shunting engines, one of them without wheels, undergoing repairs, 7 covered and 6 uncovered trucks. The station and offices at Dire Daouw give employment to twenty Europeans. Fourteen parties of railway gangers were noticed along the line, but there were probably more. Each party numbered six or seven natives, one of whom carried a rifle and mounted guard. They were under the supervision of a European, apparently, either French, Italian or Greek. Cardiff patent fuel is used on the railway. The railway is certainly a fine feat of engineering, and it is most unfortunate that at present it is far from being remunerative.

Our train left Djibouti at 6 a.m. Our passages had been booked and the baggage cleared the previous day, so that all that remained to do at the railway station was to pay for our dogs and light kit. This does not sound much, but the attendant excitement and uproar beggars description. English, French, Greeks, Arabs, Somalis, &c., all talked at once, dogs barked, many of the railway officials persistently blew horns, the engine whistled and let off steam, whilst crowds of yelling natives filled up every possible gap in the babel. Lieut. C. L. Hussey, U.S.N.A., going to Adis Ababa to negotiate a commercial treaty between Abyssinia and the United States, joined our party on the train.

Leaving Djibouti we crossed the desert plain and were soon amongst the maritime range of hills, with a big up-hill pull to K. 64. Sometimes, as a native was heard to remark, it was too much "puffy, pushy, pully, but no goey," or, as another was heard to remark, "engine, he broken winded, eaty too much coal and drinky too much water." At K. 71, patches of short tufty scrub begin to appear, showing the faint green of struggling vegetation. The ground there is red and littered with black volcanic boulders. Beyond this the boulders begin to disappear and the hillocks become less abrupt and more gravelly. At K. 78 some small cacti were noticed. Near K. 90 there is a strong post perched on the top of a rocky height, which commands
the railway and its approaches from all directions and there we see
the Abyssinian flag—green, yellow and red in horizontal bands from
above downwards—and enter Abyssinian territory. At Daonauli
we stopped for lunch, and there I noticed some "dead sea apple,"1
mountain ash and tamarind.

We had a capital spin from K. 120 to 125, either on the level
or down-hill. After that it was up again and, at K. 127, we
nearly looped the loop up-hill on a high semi-circular embankment.
Near K. 133 the black boulders again appeared, and we caught
glimpses, here and there, of large open plains of greyish earth
covered with a short stubble, on which flocks of fat-tailed sheep
(white with black heads) and goats and several camels were grazing.
Thereabouts, too, I noticed six gazelles, a couple of jackals, one big
bustard, and a lot of small white and coloured birds that I could
not identify. About K. 170 we could fancy ourselves back again
on the Karoo, with the dead level country all around, except that
scores of camels were seen grazing in addition to the cattle and the
thousands of sheep and goats. The ground there had plenty of
daremo grass besides the tufty, scrubby growth noticed already.
Just about that time "Bess," one of our three lion hounds, tried
to commit suicide by jumping out of the window. Ogilvy, however,
gallantly captured her by the hind-quarters during the performance
and hauled her back again, very dyspnoeic, but otherwise none the
worse. At K. 263 a fringe of pine and other trees followed the
serpentine course of the broad, deep river-bed, and a little further
on the country became more densely wooded, chiefly, so far as
could be seen, by mimosa trees of large timber. At this time the
darkness abruptly came on and nothing more could be seen. We
reached Dire Daouw at 7.11 p.m., having performed the journey from
Djibouti in thirteen hours. There we met Major Cobbold (late
60th Rifles) and proceeded to M. Michael Michaelidis's locando, our
headquarters for the night.

1 The green globular fruit of the "dead sea apple," on being incised, exudes
a juice of the colour and consistency of milk, which is an irritant, and I have
known the Egyptian conscript in the Sudan to introduce it into his eye in order
to set up inflammation in the hope of being invalided home.