

**NOTES FROM THE JOURNAL
OF F. M. FLAD, ONE
BISHOP GOBATS PILGRIM
MISSIONARIES IN ABYSSINIA**

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W. Douglas Veitch

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W. DOUGLAS VEITCH

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CHURCH AT AXUM - EAST END

NOTES

FROM THE

JOURNAL OF F. M. FLAD,

ONE OF BISHOP GOBAT'S PILGRIM MISSIONARIES
IN ABYSSINIA.

EDITED,

WITH A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE ABYSSINIAN CHURCH,

BY THE

REV. W. DOUGLAS VEITCH,

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PREFACE.

AT a time when missions to Africa are so warmly advocated, the following unpretending volume may not be without its use. It will convey intelligence of the existence *now* in Africa of a mission, as yet but little known, to an ancient Church and once-powerful nation—a mission which, after struggling through many difficulties, seems now, by God's blessing, fairly established, with a reasonable prospect of success, provided means to meet its increasing wants are provided. The Editor would use, with slight alteration, the prayer which terminates the history of the learned Ludolph:—"The Almighty God stir up the hearts of *British Christians* to lend their assistance to this ancient Christian nation, which might prove so useful to propagate Christianity in these remote parts of the world, and so glorious to themselves and their posterity!" And he would add his own fervent desire, that the simple Gospel of Jesus Christ, set forth before the Abyssinian Church, which so firmly withstood all the efforts of the Jesuits to bring

it into subjection to Rome, may, under God's blessing, lead it to reform those errors of doctrine and discipline which have crept in during the long ages of its eventful and often melancholy history.

A brief sketch of a portion of that history will be found in the following pages.

At the commencement of the fourth century, Meropius, a merchant, or, as some say, a philosopher of Tyre, touching on the western coast of the Red Sea, as he was journeying to India, was murdered by the barbarous natives, who, however, spared the lives of two youths, his companions, Adesius and Frumentius, and carried them to the court of the Emperor of Abyssinia. Their talents soon brought them into notice. The latter received employment as a secretary, the former was employed in the buttry.

On the death of the King, the Queen, who administered the government during her son's minority, promoted them to the important post of tutors to the infant sovereign. On attaining his majority, and assuming the reins of government, he granted them permission to return home. Adesius went at once to Tyre, but Frumentius, who, apparently with some success, had endeavoured, during his long detention at the Abyssinian court, to spread the knowledge of the 'gospel, proceeded to Alexandria to concert with the Patriarch, the renowned Athanasius, means for establishing an Abys-

sinian Church. Seeing his zeal, and pleased with his character, the Patriarch considered the mission could not be intrusted to better hands than those of Frumentius himself, and accordingly consecrated him first Bishop of Abyssinia.*

Little is known, says Geddes, of this Church till we come down to the close of the fifteenth century. It followed the Alexandrian Church in the adoption of the Eutychian heresy of but one nature in Christ, condemned in the Council of Chalcedon A.D. 451, and was thus estranged from the communion of the great majority of the Oriental Churches; and when subsequently the Saracens (who, under the celebrated Amrou, invaded Egypt, A.D. 638) extended their dominions along the whole northern coast of Africa, as far as Suta, it was so entirely severed from all connexion with Christendom, that its very existence was forgotten. And well would it have been for Abyssinia had it remained in oblivion, till some other nation than Portugal revived its memory, and other hands than those of Loyola and his fellows undertook its restoration.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century some Portuguese vessels, which had been sent on a voyage of dis-

* Frumentius, under the name of "Abba Salama," is celebrated in the Ethiopian Martyrology.—(*Ludolph.*) He was consecrated A.D. 330. The Abyssinian Church, till this day, has but one bishop, styled Abuna, who is consecrated by the Coptic "Patriarch of Alexandria, of the Chair of St Mark." By the Arabic (pseudo) canons of the Council of Nice the seventh place of precedence is assigned to the Abuna of Abyssinia.