THE BRITISH DIPLOMATS IN
MOWATH, 1926 - 1936

A THESIS PRESENTED FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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approved by:

[Signature]
Foreword

This study was inspired by the desire to write a clear, consecutive account of the British economic and political interests in that part of Africa which was the last to come under the dominion of a foreign Power. Whatever claims to originality it may have are based not so much on the discovery of new facts as in the method of treating these facts. The story of Great Britain’s relations with Ethiopia is at present scattered throughout a great many documents and books which deal with the problem from the viewpoint of some country other than England or from the viewpoint of the broader European diplomacy. The writer also feels that not enough attention has been given in the past to the economic motives which underlay so many of Great Britain’s actions in regard to the Ethiopian Empire. The present study is largely a synthesis of the British-Ethiopian relations from the time when the nations of Europe began to be interested in the partition of Africa to the present; therefore it does not go into great detail on any single phase of these relations. If somewhat more space is given to the final chapter, which brings the story from 1906 to the present, it is because this most recent period has been treated less fully by other writers. It is realized that the nearness of recent events may render judgment on them more liable to error, but an honest attempt has been made to formulate this judgment in the light of the past. It is hoped that this study will help to clear up the confusion in many persons’ minds which resulted from Great Britain’s attitude toward the late Italo-Ethiopian crisis, by its tracing historically of the evolution of her policy in regard to Ethiopia under the “old diplomacy”, which so many of us fondly believed had been replaced forever by the “new diplomacy” of the League of Nations. Truth is always valuable, no matter how disillusioning.
In so far as possible, the original sources have been used as a final guide, and where secondary materials were consulted a careful check has been made on the authenticity of the facts and opinions stated.

Helvin Young.
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Chapter One

Introduction

The British interests in Ethiopia cannot be considered apart from the general revival of imperialism that took place in Britain and in the other important countries of Europe after 1870. For this reason a few general observations on imperialism will help us to see in a better perspective this small, but important part of the larger picture. If one wishes really to understand the basic motivating forces that underlie imperialism he must not rely altogether upon a study of the treaties and conventions made by the foreign offices and the debates in the parliamentary bodies. The former usually represent only the formal sanction of faits accomplis, and the latter give high-sounding and often false reasons for acts motivated by carefully cloaked and more selfish purposes. More fruitful results are obtained by the examination of commercial and industrial statistics, the proceedings of various lobbyist organizations, the accounts of explorers and other missions, and the less studied private utterances of men in public life. Such a study convinces one that the principal dynamic force underlying imperialistic expansion is economic, and that all others are subordinate to it. The political phase is the easiest to study, but political formalities usually only sanction economic necessity. Very seldom, under the new imperialism of the post 1870's, do we find expeditions sent out directly by the home governments to seize new territories. Agents of private companies or explorers acting in close unison with them have usually preceded the representatives of the govern-

1 This point of view has been finely stated in F. T. Loun's, Imperialism and World Politics, especially in the first four chapters. See also Leonard Woolf's Imperialism and Civilization.
ments and acquired interests which they suddenly find themselves unable to protect but loath to give up. Follow, the army and the raising of the flag.

The economic factors which constitute the principal motive underlying imperialism may be regarded as three in number: (1) Colonies furnish a market for surplus manufactured products; (2) Colonies provide many raw materials not produced in the home country; (3) Colonies furnish a field for the investment of surplus capital, capital which cannot profitably be used in further expansion of home plants and projects. A little careful thought should show one that the economic rewards which come from colonies fall to a rather limited group of capitalists. Of course, in our highly interdependent economic order, the case can be made out that the good of one is the good of all; still, a limited group of bankers, shippers, merchants, and manufacturers comprises the persons who are really interested and who do the wire pulling behind the curtain, while the civil and military puppets on the stage do the dancing. Sometimes the cost of getting and maintaining a colonial monopoly, which comes from the taxpayers at large, exceeds the benefits which eventually trickle down to them from the favored few at the top.

In addition to the economic factors discussed above, there is another, also basically economic, the interest of that numerous class of colonial administrators and officialdom, both civil and military, whose inside political influence must not be underestimated.

Then, it must be admitted, that there is such a thing as national honor, perhaps only a defense mechanism to cloak economic aggrandizement, but also having in it a strong element of emotion, which does not permit a nation to back down on a colonial venture once it has been launched.

2 See Non, op. cit., Chapters III and IV, for an excellent treatment.
The "interests" can always "play up" to this emotion when popular support is needed, and a few clever newspaper articles can soon make the British (or any other) people believe that the profits of the "Weevil-boll Cotton Syndicate" are the vital concern of the whole nation—and perhaps they are!

The missionary motive has also been used to draw popular support for colonial enterprises, but we doubt if it was so dynamic in the rather secular generation of the new imperialism as it was when mercantilist and Catholic Spain and France were building up their older empires. The English were always singularly innocent of this noble motive, both under the old imperialism and the new.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century France lost almost all of her great colonial empire, and Spain suffered the same loss early in the nineteenth. Great Britain herself lost the American colonies, and after this time until about 1870 her new acquisitions, in square miles at least, were comparatively small. The government and the people as a whole during this period seemed singularly indifferent to colonial expansion. In fact, during the mid-Victorian years, there was more than mere indifference; there was active opposition, not only to colonial expansion but also to making any serious efforts to retain old colonies which might desire their independence. We could make numerous citations in proof of this contention, but as it is already recognized by most historians, a few will suffice. The movement toward disruption of the British empire reached its height in the decade 1861-1870. Among the intelligentsia it was perhaps best advocated by Professor Goldwin Smith in his famous series

4 Schuyler, op.cit., 538.
of letters in *The Daily News*, 1862-1863. These letters started a flurry of controversy in political and journalistic circles. Among the statesmen, we may cite three whose utterances are illustrative of the disruptive movement. Henry (afterwards Lord) Thring, long counsel for the Home Office, in 1865 actually drafted in pamphlet form a bill providing a procedure which colonies might use in attaining independence. The same year John Bright, speaking in Parliament, said: "I suspect... that there is no objection to the independence of Canada whenever Canada may wish it. I have been glad to hear those statements, because I think they mark an extraordinary progress in sound opinions in this country... I do not object to that separation... in the least; I believe it would be better for her and better for us." In 1870 Gladstone, himself, speaking in the House of Commons, said that colonies grew to the point where separation is inevitable. In the past this separation had always been accompanied by bloodshed. He hoped that in the future it could be accomplished peaceably.

We may conclude that the anti-imperial movement reached its climax in the early part of Gladstone's first ministry.

What lay back of this "weariness of colonies"? Again we must turn to economic trends. It is true that England had taken some lessons from the American Revolution and from the revolts in the Spanish Americas. It is also true that Canada was proving more trouble than she seemed to be worth. But the primary reason for the change of attitude was the shift in the whole mode of economic thought. The mercantilism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, with its navigation laws, its high tariffs, and

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8 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 3rd Series, vol. CC, 1900-01.
9 Schuyler, *op. cit.*, 549.
its colonial monopolies, had given way to a doctrine of laissez-faire which is best seen in its English form in the teachings of the "Manchester School". Either by accident or by the flowering of a superior genius England forged into the lead during the last half of the eighteenth century and held it during the first three quarters of the nineteenth, in every major field of industrial production. And it was not just a small lead, it was an overwhelming one, not seriously challenged by any other country. "Even as late as 1870 Great Britain was smelting half of the world's iron, and more than three times as much as any other nation; she was making almost one half of the world's cotton goods; her foreign commerce was more than twice that of any rival." 10 England became highly industrialized and urbanized. She depended on foreign markets, and these markets were found largely in other less highly industrialized countries, not in undeveloped colonies. Her very existence depended on free trade, the removal of all barriers. Her own import duties were lifted, allowing food and raw materials to flow in unobstructed. The navigation laws were repealed. English merchants and manufacturers flourished. It was a paradise, so long as the industrial revolution did not come to other countries. No wonder the statesmen of the time were unwilling to waste blood and money to gain new colonies not needed, or to hold those old ones whose value to commerce was doubted.

But paradise seldom lasts even so long as it did for the British capitalists, and for them, too, it ended. During the period 1870-1900 the production of pig iron in Great Britain increased 50%. During the same period it increased in Germany 600% and in the United States 966%. It is the same story in the cotton industry and in export trade. 11 Countries which

10 Mooc, op. cit., 25.
11 Ibid., 26.
had once been free and open markets now raised tariff walls around themselves. British manufacturers were shaken rudely out of their complacency and were forced to begin looking for hitherto undeveloped markets. The answer seemed to be colonies, new colonies, rather than the old ones, one of which was already erecting tariff barriers against the mother country. In 1868 the Royal Colonial Institute was founded in London. The founders of this Institute were representatives of both the self-governing and the crown colonies, men who had held high office in colonial administration, and home statesmen and politicians interested in colonial development. Its purpose was to arouse England from colonial indifference and to combat anti-imperialism. At one of its early dinners distinguished foreign diplomats were present and many prominent members of the British government, including Gladstone himself. The Institute was supposed to be non-political, but it carried on a program of "education". It must be remembered that in spite of individual utterances of ministers the idea of cutting loose the colonies had never been adopted as an official government policy.

The opposition was quick to capitalize upon and to accelerate the change in sentiment, and Disraeli, not really an imperialist in his early career, "skilfully seized upon imperialism as a party issue, and probably no part of his political program appealed more powerfully to the British electorate than his pledge to maintain the integrity of the Empire. The conservative victory of 1874 drove Little-Englandism completely from the field of practical politics".

With this victory the new imperialism may be said to have got definitely under way. The British were perhaps the earliest in the field, but

12 See Schuyler, op. cit., 556, and Bruce, op. cit., 147.
13 Schuyler, op. cit., 556.
14 Ibid., 546-47.
15 Ibid., 560.
they were soon followed by France, Germany, and Italy, as well as by many of the lesser powers. Africa provided a virgin field for exploitation, and in a generation it all came under foreign flags—all except the ancient and mysterious empire of Abyssinia. Now if it had not been for Signor Mussolini's revival of colonial conquest in 1935 Abyssinia to most of us would probably still be just a white area on the maps in the geography books, accompanied by an exposition of one short paragraph and another shorter one, and His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie, just another oriental potentate with exceedingly white robes and sun helmet and exceedingly black whiskers, mounted beneath a very large umbrella on a very small jackass. Signor Mussolini, however, caused a sudden tempest of curiosity about this little known part of Africa, and stimulated the publishing of some rather excellent studies on Abyssinia. It was also revealed that Abyssinia has not always been so mysterious to a number of travelers and scientists, and that far from being a sudden and unsuspecting victim of aggression, she has for many years lived in dread of foreign invasion (and not always from Italy). As an eminent American statesman and scholar recently put it: "For fifty years Ethiopia's problem has been that of a minnow in a pool with large fish, darting here and there to avoid the mouth which, for the moment, appeared the widest open."16

We shall present very briefly the chief geographical features17 of the country and its history in so far as both have a bearing on the problem at hand. Abyssinia (officially Ethiopia) lies mostly between the latitudes of 5° and 15° north and the longitudes of 35° and 42° east. It has an area of approximately 350,000 square miles and a population estimated at around five and one half millions (some estimates say more). It is

16 Newton D. Baker, in the introduction to Elizabeth P. MacCallum, Rivalries in Ethiopia, ll.
17 Based largely on the article in The Encyclopedia Britannica, p. 70.
bounded on the north by Eritrea, on the west by the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, on the south by Uganda and Kenya, and on the southeast and east by Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland and French Somaliland. Thus, its total area lies in the tropics, but the temperature is considerably moderated in summer by the high altitude of most of the country. With the exception of an area of low plateau bordering Somaliland and a small extent of lowland bordering the Sudan, Abyssinia is a lofty and mountainous plateau, extremely rugged in parts and deeply scarred and eroded by water. The best descriptions and pictures remind one very much of the peaks and parks, buttes and gorges of our own Colorado and New Mexico—in terrain only, remember, not in vegetation and climate. The outer rim of mountains forms a rim for the only slightly lower plateau, from which other ranges and peaks rise to the heights of California's Sierras and slightly surpass Pike's Peak and Mount Whitney.

The climate is warm, but not hot, the year around, and the year is divided into one wet and one dry season. The dry season (bogzo) lasts roughly from October to mid-June, and the rainy season (karant), from mid-June (there are earlier "little rains") to October. The climate is usually recognized as being a healthful one for Europeans, although the rainy season is somewhat uncomfortable and monotonous.

The scenery is picturesque, but thorn bearing vegetation in many places impedes the going of the traveler, and the precipitous walls of deep-cut watercourses slow down his progress. The soil is fertile, and it is generally agreed that it could produce far more than it does under the present primitive farming methods. The chief agricultural products

18 A delightful recent travel book is Gordon MacCreagh's *The Last of Free Africa*. See also Henry M. Stanley's *Comparative and Magdala*. A number of more scientific articles are found in *The Geographical Journal*, vol. XV, LIII, and LX.
are coffee, hides, skins, dairy products, flour, beeswax, and civet, and these not much in excess of the quantities necessary to supply the sparse population.

A great deal was heard at the time of the Italian Conquest about the vast mineral wealth which the Italians expected to develop, but the best opinion seems to be agreed that such claims are as yet largely unsubstantiated.\(^{19}\)

The deep-cut, rapidly flowing watercourses of the Abyssinian plateau have already been mentioned. The main river in eastern Abyssinia is the Hawash, whose valley affords a pass into the interior, but whose waters lose themselves in the sands of Eritrea before reaching the Red Sea. Other rivers do reach the Indian Ocean through Somaliland, but this study is mainly concerned with the head-waters of the Nile, which drain about one third of the total area. Of these the chief is the Abai or Blue Nile, which rises near Lake Tsana, enters it at the southwest corner, flows through it, and leaves it in the southeast corner by two or three channels opening through a rocky ledge. It is here that the waters could most easily be regulated or obstructed. Even the Abyssinians realize this, for "...Ethiopia still annually celebrates the 'Feast of the Cross' to commemorate the return of the true cross to Ethiopia by the Egyptians in return for a promise that the waters of Lake Tsana would never be diverted from the Blue Nile."\(^{20}\) Lake Tsana, itself, is a sheet of fresh water 1160 square miles in extent, lying 5,580 feet above sea level. British engineers have reported that the lake's capacity can be increased from 3.5 to 8 billion cubic meters. This would irrigate all the lands conveniently situated.

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along the Nile for two years in complete absence of rain.\footnote{21}

Ethiopia has often been called an ancient kingdom, and so, indeed, it is; just how ancient we do not know. The classical historians and geographers called all the region from Egypt to India, both countries inclusive, Ethiopia and, the people Ethiopians. They called all dark-skinned peoples Ethiopians,\footnote{22} the word Ethiopian itself meaning "burnt face".

Although there is considerable history of a legendary nature, the Ethiopians really know nothing for certain of their history before the Christian era. The word Abyssinia is a Europeanized form of the Arabic "Ib~bash", after a tribe Semite invaders from the Arabian peninsula some centuries before the Christian era.\footnote{23} The name is looked on with scorn in Ethiopia today; nevertheless this Arabic tribe probably introduced a much higher culture to the region than it had previously had. The prehistoric inhabitants were probably negroes. These later mixed with Hamite and Semite invaders. The Abyssinians themselves claim to be descendants of Ham.\footnote{24}

There is a strong strain of Old Testament influence in their religion; indeed, for centuries their kings have claimed to be direct descendants of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, hence the title of the Emperors "Lion of the Tribe of Judah".

Christianity was probably introduced, or at least made the national religion, by King Ezana of Aksum in the second quarter of the fourth century.\footnote{25} The name Ethiopia was first given to the limited region which now goes under that name by the translators (unknown) of the Bible from Greek into "Ethiopic" (Ge ez), who thus rendered the Hebrew, "Kush" (although

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
\item\footnote{21} \textit{Ibid.}, 34.
\item\footnote{22} Budge, Sir E. A. Wallis, \textit{A History of Ethiopia, Nubia, and Abyssinia}, vol. I, VII.
\item\footnote{23} \textit{Ibid.}
\item\footnote{24} \textit{Ibid.}, 129-30.
\item\footnote{25} \textit{Ibid.}, XI-XII.
\end{itemize}}
the real Kush was probably north of the present Abyssinia. It was not
till about 1270 that any king was able to bring all the territories of
the present kingdom under his rule and assume the title Negus Negast
(King of kings).

The ancient kingdom has always been independent, even if not always
a kingdom. It formed no part of any of the great empires of antiquity.
No warlike invader ever scaled its massive walls. "The whole of geog-
raphical Abyssinia was a huge rock-fortress, the walls of which were the
mountain ranges, with their almost perpendicular sides, the passages
through which in the narrow chasms and khors were known only to the
natives... No ancient nation ever conquered the Abyssinians, in fact no
ancient writer knew anything about the plateau and those who dwelt on it."23

So much for what Ethiopia was; let us turn now to what it is, or at
least was prior to 1936. Abyssinia proper consists of the kingdoms of
Tigre, Amhara, Gojam, and part of Shoa. West and southwest of this the
West Galla Highland and the remainder of Shoa make up a geographical unit.
In the south is the Somaliland plateau, including Harar. The administra-
tive divisions are provinces, sub-districts, and villages. The old king-
doms mentioned above have little significance any more. In theory the
government was an absolute monarchy of the strictest kind, but in practice
it was feudal, the power and influence of the Negus Negast depending entirely
on how extensively his troops had conquered the troops of the numerous
neguses and rasas who were continually warring against him. It is necessary
to understand this turbulent, unsettled feudal state, where the ruler was
never much more than a military overlord, in order to understand certain
developments of the past and to predict difficulties which may be met by

26 Ibid., 120.
27 Ibid., VII. There are several other spellings.
28 Ibid., 127.
the new conquerors in the future. "The whole history of the country is, in fact, with a few bright intervals due to the efforts of some of the more enlightened monarchs, one gloomy record of interminable wars, barbaric deeds, and unstable governments, of adventurers usurping thrones, only to be themselves unseated, and of raids, rape, and pilage."

Among these more enlightened monarchs two stand out prominently. The first was Menelik II (1849-1913), who attacked the strength of the feudal system, substituting, for the hereditary rulers of the provinces, authorities of his own nomination. The other is the Ras Tafari or Haile Selassie, whom almost all unprejudiced observers respect and admire for his honest efforts to restore some order out of the chaos which ensued after Menelik's death. He was just beginning to succeed when his throne was so ruthlessly snatched away from him.

The population of Ethiopia is a varied one. Not more than one third of it is, properly speaking, Abyssinian, these dwelling in the four ancient kingdoms mentioned above. These Abyssinians vary in physical appearance; one authority describes the prevailing type in Shoa as follows: "...tall and well formed, the features are handsome, straight, and regular, the eyes are bold and fearless, the nose good, the mouth sensitive, the hair dark brown and curly or long and straight and almost blue-black in color... the complexion is light brown..." The bulk of the remainder of the population is Galla, distributed mainly south and west of Abyssinia proper. In the northeast are the Denakils, in the south and southeast some Somalis,

30 Budge, op. cit., 130-31.
and in the northwest various negroid races loosely called Shangalla.

This heterogeneous population speaks no less than seventy different languages, two hundred if all the dialects are counted. Amharic (the language of the tribe which imposes its overlordship on the rest) is the official language and by no means an easy one. Education, literature, and art are practically non-existent, except for the little that is connected with the church.

Although Ethiopia is officially a Christian country, only the Abyssinians are really Christian. Some of the Galla tribes have been converted, but are probably no more Christian in fact than some of the barbarian tribes of Franks who were converted wholesale early in the Dark Ages. The particular form of Christianity is Monophysite, inheriting many of the beliefs of the old churches of the Syrians and Copts. It accepts the Bible as the first authority; God is one and three, three equal and separate persons. The head of the church is the Metropolitan or Bune, and is always chosen from the monks of the Coptic monasteries and ordained by the Coptic Patriarch in Cairo. In spite of the variety of religions in Ethiopia there is a remarkable degree of toleration, and there have never been any religious wars.

It is always difficult to speak of the character and disposition of a people; in fact, it is probably a fallacy to ascribe certain traits of character to a particular race, for individuals differ widely in any country, in Ethiopia as well as in the United States. Most travelers agree that the Ethiopians are suspicious of foreigners, or "brangi", as they call them, and with good reason. They are immensely proud of their independence and

32 Rey, op. cit., 177.
33 Ibid., 183.
34 Budge, op. cit., 156-58.
35 Rey, op. cit., 182.
have been too secure in their feeling of invincibility against all invaders. We call them backward and unprogressive, and so they are according to our standards, but there is no reason to think the Ethiopians prior to the Italian invasion were not just as happy and well-satisfied as their more enlightened neighbors.

With this background in mind we turn now to trace historically the particular interests the British people and nation have had and still have in this strange "land of the burnt-faced people".
Chapter Two

The British Expedition to Iragdala

We have already mentioned the anti-imperialistic attitude of the British government during the 1860's. In the latter part of this decade an incident occurred which well illustrated this attitude. It proved that a military expedition could be sent into a country, accomplish effectively the purpose for which it ostensibly was sent, and withdraw leaving the sovereignty of that country unimpaired and without appropriating a foot of territory or obtaining any of the economic concessions which so often lead to later political possession. We refer to the expedition of Sir Robert Napier in 1867-1868 to effect the release of a number of English and other foreign prisoners held at Iragdala by Emperor Theodore II. As this incident seems not to be closely connected with later and more vital British interests in Abyssinia we shall not dwell on it at great length, interesting though it is.

To go back briefly—the Portuguese had sent missions to Abyssinia in the sixteenth century, but all the Portuguese were later expelled. Europeans did not have much further interest in the country until the publications of James Bruce, the British explorer, who discovered the sources of the Blue Nile in 1765. In 1805 came the first British mission under George, Viscount Valentia and Henry Salt. These pioneers were followed in the first half of the nineteenth century by travelers, missionaries, and merchants of many countries, some of whom settled down to live in the country. In 1856 Bishop Cobat conceived the idea of sending

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out missionaries who could do secular work as well; so after the turn of the century, there appears to have been some European influences at work in the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia, insignificant though they may have been most of the time.

In 1841 a Major W. C. Harris was sent on a mission by the Indian government from Bombay to the king of Shoa, with whom he concluded a treaty of friendship. 2 Seven years later Walter Plowden, who had traveled extensively in Abyssinia, was appointed, first, consul to Massawa (an important port city on Annesley Bay in present Eritrea) and then, a little later, Her Majesty’s consul in Abyssinia. Plowden negotiated a treaty of commerce and friendship 3 between his country and Mus ‘Ali, which was signed at Ennowya. This treaty provided for an exchange of envoys between the two courts. It provided for amicable trade relations on the most favored nation basis and stated the amount of customs duties to be collected on British imports. Anyone who knows anything about the bothersome system of "custom’s gates" between provinces in Abyssinia will recognize the difficulty of enforcing this provision. Both parties agreed to try to keep the trade routes to the seacoast and the seacoast itself open. Finally, there was the usual provision for extraterritorial rights commonly found in treaties of an enlightened with a more backward Power. Palmerston’s instructions to Plowden emphasized the fact that Her Majesty’s government had no territorial designs on Abyssinia or the coasts of the Red Sea. 4 Plowden had emphasized in his memoranda the importance of the British possession of the Island of Massawa, because Massawa was an important terminus for

2 Budge, op. cit., 491.
3 The full text of this treaty is found in British State and Foreign Papers, vol. 37, 4-7. Hereafter this compilation will be cited as State Papers.
4 Ibid., vol. 52, 782.
caravan routes over which came gold, ivory, musk, coffee, and gum. He thought this trade could absorb in return a considerable amount of British manufactures. In spite of the consul's hopes, however, no considerable British trade ever developed with Abyssinia, nor was any other European country any more fortunate. Mr. Plowden held his post until his death in 1860. He was much beloved by King Theodore II, at whose court or camp he spent much of his time.

It is necessary to say a few words about the aforementioned Theodore, for with his coronation as Negus Negast in 1855 the history of modern Abyssinia may be said to have begun. Born Lij Kassa, a commoner, at Kwara, in 1818, he rose rapidly by his great military ability to the throne of the Conquering Lion of Judah. He conceived himself to be God's special messenger, sent to wipe out Islam from his own realm and the surrounding territories; in fact, he probably envisaged no less an achievement than world conquest. His reign is a dreary record of war and bloodshed, conquest and pillage, revenge and cruelty. Never secure on his throne, he was constantly in the field against first this provincial ruler, then that, who rose in revolt and challenged his overlordship. At first he seems to have been somewhat lenient to his enemies, but constant warfare hardened him, till the latter years of his reign present a chronicle of sadistic butchery that would turn the strongest stomach. It sounds like the wars recorded in the Book of Judges. Still, it is profitable to read an account of Theodore for the insight it gives into the mind of this primitive sovereign and the political and social mores of the Abyssinian people. Their ways are not our ways, nor their thoughts, our thoughts. Or are we equally

5 Ibid., 774. The entire Abyssinian correspondence for 1846–1860, a rather voluminous one, is found in this volume, p. 772–832.
6 Budge., op. cit., 492.
as bloodthirsty and cruel in a little more refined manner?

Consul Plowden met his death at the hands of some of Theodore’s enemies in 1860. The Emperor took a terrible revenge on these murderers of the one foreigner he seems really to have loved and trusted. On February 2, 1862 Captain Cameron was appointed as Plowden’s successor. In his notice of appointment Lord Russell, the Foreign Minister, warned him not to take sides in the civil war raging in the disordered country. 7

About this time Theodore seems to have decided to take advantage of a stipulation of the treaty of 1849 and send envoys to Queen Victoria. Accordingly, in November, 1862 he dispatched a letter by Cameron to Her Britannic Majesty, 8 notifying her of his intention. In this letter he expresses his appreciation of Her Majesty’s friendship and protests his good will towards her. He asks her to arrange for the safe passage of his embassy, which he fears will be stopped at the seacoast by the Turks. (The Ethiopian words for Egyptian and Turk are synonymous.) The letter affords an interesting glimpse into the mind of this cruel and tyrannous, yet withal astonishingly simple-hearted, naive, courteous, and deeply devout monarch. There is a refreshing simplicity and straightforwardness about it that a western diplomat could not duplicate, try as he might.

The communication reached the British foreign office, was read and considered, but not answered. The officials seemed to think that it smacked too much of a bid for an Alliance against the Turk. The British had no desire to see Egypt invaded from the south. The failure to answer the letter, however, was a great mistake. It was probably the main cause of an expensive military expedition, which could have been spared by the use of a sheet of

paper, a little ink, and some of the honey and oil of diplomacy. We must remember that Theodore was, like most self-made men, jealous of his position and very sensitive about his honor. He considered himself the equal, if not the superior, of the European rulers. There are many instances which show how ready he was to perceive and avenge any insult, real or fancied, to his dignity. When, in 1864, he learned that there was no answer to his friendly overture his anger knew no bounds. Cameron was imprisoned and with him several other Europeans residing at the court. When the news of this imprisonment reached England, of course it created quite a stir. Mr. Hormuzd Rassam, an Armenian, accompanied by Dr. Blanc of the Bombay Medical Establishment and Lieutenant W. F. Prideaux, was dispatched with a letter from Her Majesty to the offending Lion of the Tribe of Judah. This letter hinted rather guardedly that Her Majesty knew all was not well with Cameron, and asked that he be allowed to return to England. The friendship of Great Britain for Abyssinia was reaffirmed, but the coveted aid against the Turk was not mentioned. It seems to have taken Mr. Rassam a long time to deliver the Queen's message to Theodore, and when he finally did it failed to satisfy the irritable war lord, who by this time seems to have been pretty badly deranged. Instead of releasing Plowden and the others, Theodore added the Armenian and his party to his prisoners.10

By this time the delay was causing unfavorable press comment in England, and every now and then the Foreign Secretary was questioned in Parliament about the situation and the action which was being taken. On May 23, 1865 a rather heated debate was started when Lord Chelmsford took the opportunity to air what he felt to be the government’s neglect in the matter. In

10 Hudge, op. cit., 504-07.
his reply Lord Russell admitted the Foreign Office had erred, but accused
Lord Chelmsford of rising to cast aspersions on the government instead of
to really be helpful in rescuing the prisoners. He affirmed that any dis-
cussion of the matter in which anything was said offensive to Theodore
simply made the situation of the prisoners more delicate than it already
was. 11

In July 1867 the government despaired of accomplishing anything by
diplomacy and decided to dispatch a military expedition to release the
prisoners. The advance forces of this expedition landed at Zoulla on
Annesley Bay late in October, 1867. There were about 12,000 officers and
men in the army, 6,000 to guard the depot of Zoulla and keep open the com-
munications and 6,000 for the marching column. It was a march of nearly
400 miles from Annesley Bay to the fortress of Magdala, where the prisoners
were held. The expedition was in command of Sir Robert Napier, Commander-
in-Chief of the Bombay Army. 12

Although it had been some time since most of the officers and men had
done any active campaigning, the expedition went forward with very few
hitches. The transport train was made up entirely of pack miles, for there
were not then in Abyssinia any roads which would accommodate wheeled vehicles,
and there are very few even today. When we read how effectively these
British troops penetrated four-hundred miles through mountainous country
and how quietly they accomplished their business, we cannot help being amused
by the elaborate preparations for the late Italian invasion and the journal-
istic fanfare that preceded it. Verily, a pack of thoroughbred wolf-hounds
was sent to take a frightened and trembling rabbit.

12 An exceedingly well-written and entertaining account of this expe-
dition, related by an eye witness, is found in Henry M. Stanley's
Conquering and Magdala.
However, Sir Robert Napier's expedition would not have gone forward so readily had it not been for the co-operation of the natives through whose land they were marching. At no time was the column harassed by hostile snipers or cavalrymen, and it was always easy to get food and forage from the villagers when they had any. The three principal provincial rulers, Menelik of Shoa, Gobaze of Amhara, and Kasa of Tigre were friendly to the British, because they saw an easy way to get rid of Theodore. Sir Robert Napier's proclamation to the rulers and people of Abyssinia is worth quoting in full here, for it shows exactly the purpose of the expedition:

"It is known to you that Theodorus, King of Abyssinia, detains in captivity the British consul, Cameron; the British envoy, Ressam; and many others in violation of the laws of all civilized nations. All friendly persuasion having failed to obtain their release, my sovereign has commanded me to lead an army to liberate them. All who befriend the prisoners or assist in their liberation shall be well rewarded; but those who may injure them shall be severely punished when the time shall arrive for the march of a British army through your country. Bear in mind, people of Abyssinia, that the Queen of England has no unfriendly feelings towards you, and no design against your country or your liberty. Your religious establishments, your persons, and property shall be carefully protected. All supplies for my soldiers shall be paid for. No peaceable inhabitants shall be molested. The sole object for which the British force has been sent to Abyssinia is the liberation of Her Majesty's servants and others unjustly detained as captives; and as soon as that object has been effected, it will be withdrawn.

There is no intention to occupy permanently any portion of the Abyssinian territory, or to interfere with the government of the country."13

This proclamation was adhered to to the letter.

On the ninth of April the expeditionary force arrived before the great rock citadel of Magdala, behind which the long-suffering prisoners awaited release. On the morrow the forces of the Emperor were defeated on the slopes below the fortress with great slaughter. The losses of the

13 Stanley, op. cit., 49.
British were nominal. The Abyssinians charged bravely, but were mowed down by the British musketry. The much vaunted cannon of Theodore proved very ineffective. Seeing that the game was up, the fallen warrior liberated Cameron and his company, sending Rassam to intercede for him with the British general. Due to some misunderstanding he appears to have believed for a time that his personal surrender would not be required, but this illusion was dispelled when on Easter Monday following the fatal Good Friday the first rout, the British stormed the fortress, itself, and planted the flag on its ramparts. His soldiers almost all dead, his most trusted officers slain in battle, the foreign invader before him, and rebel forces of his own people on all sides, this conqueror who had risen to power through violence, this warrior who had never trembled in the face of danger did not flinch now. Placing a pistol, the gift of Queen Victoria, to his mouth, he died, true to the warrior's code.  

His mission accomplished, in the quiet, unostentatious British manner, Sir Robert Napier immediately withdrew his forces to the coast, after having first blown up the gates of the fortress and burned the evacuated city. The officers and men soon set sail for home, and thus ended an expedition strange in the annals of imperialism.

Upon the withdrawal of the British each of the three chiefs mentioned before proclaimed himself king, and Abyssinia went on under a regime of bloodshed and civil war just as before. Ras Kasa soon reduced the number of rivals to two when he defeated Ras Gobaze, and thereupon had himself crowned as Johannes (John) IV. This still left Menelik of Shoal, but Johannes soon had the good fortune to defeat him also, whereupon peace was made, a marriage arranged between son and daughter of the rivals, and

14 Stanley gives a vivid account of the operations before and in Magdala. *Op. cit.*, Chapters IX-XI.
Menelik recognized as Johannes' successor to the throne. This he ascended in 1889 after Johannes was killed on the mor of a victory over the Mahdists. 15

15 Budge, op. cit., 520-26.
Chapter Three

Reasons for Renewed British Interests in Abyssinia, Egypt, the Sudan, and Somaliland

The events summarized in the last chapter show that in 1868, at least, the British had no permanent interests in Abyssinia, or they would not so readily have evacuated it. The incident may be said to illustrate the foreign policy of Little Englandism at its height. The commerce between Great Britain and Abyssinia was trifling, there were no government-secured loans, and no mineral concessions. The next decade, however, was to see a development which caused Britain to have a vital concern with the politics of the ancient empire. This development was the British occupation of Egypt and their subsequent expansion into the Sudan. It is so much the raison d'être for British Ethiopian policy that it is worth while treating, if but briefly.

In the nineteenth century Egypt was nominally under the suzerainty of Turkey. This meant mainly the paying of tribute to the Sultan, who exercised little administrative control over the country. The Khedive (title regularized in 1866) was practically an absolute monarch, who governed or misgoverned according to his fancy. Said Pasha contracted quite a heavy foreign debt, mainly in France and England, and his successor, Ismail Pasha, who ascended the throne in 1863, exceeded him in extravagant borrowing; in fact, he wrecked the credit of the state. The flag often follows the bondholders, and the case of Egypt was no exception. The Khedive suspended payment on the foreign debt in April, 1876, and the

1 This brief summary of the Egyptian situation follows, in the main, the account in Ward and Gooch, The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, vol. III, 155-76.
Caisse de la Dette Publique followed a month later, soon to be superseded by a commission of control, which instituted a scheme of financial and political reforms. While the interests of the British bondholders were an important factor in the government's intervention, it is not likely it would have taken up the task so wholeheartedly if it had not been for the purchase of the Suez Canal shares in 1875.

Great Britain and France, the two main parties on the commission of control, were forced in their dealings with the treacherous and undependable Khedive to adopt measure after measure which seriously impaired the independence of Egypt. Naturally there was resentment on the part of the natives, and this resentment came to a head in the rebellion of June, 1882, led by Ahmed Arabi, who was now to all intents a military dictator. Arabi was a great patriot to many of his Egyptian followers, but to the British he was an exceedingly disturbing factor. In July the British naval forces, after the French had refused to co-operate, destroyed the rebel fortresses at Alexandria. In September General Wolseley occupied Cairo, and the revolt was at an end. So, too, was at an end the part of France in the financial administration of Egypt. From now on, the British alone had Egypt on their hands, and it was to prove a disturbing factor in European diplomacy for at least twenty years.

So much for Egypt; it is in the region to the south of Egypt that we are primarily interested in this study. If one connects two opposite terminals of an electric battery by a wire, the current will travel from one terminal to the other. The Sudan was the wire which carried the current of British interest in Ethiopia from the desert lowlands of Egypt to the well-watered highlands of Abyssinia. The Sudan is a great belt of territory lying between the Atlantic Ocean and the Red Sea, south of the Sahara and
Kubian deserts and north of the Congo jungles. It is probably the finest
and most fertile region in all Africa, especially the southern part, which
is better watered than the northern. The original population of the Sudan
was Negro, but it was invaded by Mohammedan Arabs, attracted, no doubt,
largely by the opportunities of capturing and selling the aborigines into
slavery.

The Egyptian sovereignty in the eastern part of the Sudan dated from
the time of Mehemet Ali, and from the first had been illusory and precar-
ious. The ubiquitous Turk, who claimed suzerainty over territory in
places, he could never hope to govern, confirmed the Egyptian control
over the Sudan on condition that it should never be alienated to any for-
eign power. In 1874 General Charles Gordon was appointed Governor-General
of the province. Naturally, the British became concerned over the Sudan
at the same time they began to have an interest in Egypt, and they in-
herited its cares along with the cares of the Egyptians. Shortly before
the occupation of Alexandria and Cairo trouble broke out far to the south.
A fanatical Islamite, Mohamed Ahmed, proclaimed himself the Messenger of
God, or Mahdi, and in 1882 rallied the Mohammedans to a Holy War. He was
so successful that the British Foreign Office, not eager to bite off more
than it could chew, decided the best policy would be to evacuate the
Egyptian Sudan, and this policy was accordingly carried into effect.

The evacuation of the Egyptian garrisons involved considerable dif-
culty. In 1884 General Gordon, former governor of the Sudan, was reconfir-
menced in his old title and sent to supervise the withdrawal. There seems
little doubt that Gordon exceeded his instructions and as a result got into
difficulty. The Mahdist forces closed in on him, and he was killed and
his entire army annihilated at Khartum, January 25, 1885. A relief expe-
dition, somewhat dilatorily dispatched, arrived too late to do anything, and since it had failed to accomplish that which it had started out to do, the British government decided to leave the Sudan beyond Wadi Halfi, with the exception of the Red Sea littoral, in the hands of the rebels.

Soon after this Mohammed Ali died, and the religious character of the Mahdist movement gradually disappeared.

The withdrawal of the British and Egyptian forces, however, was only temporary. As the fanatical phase of Mahdism slowly died down, and as the inhabitants of the Sudan began to desire peace and order, a gradual re-conquest took place. This policy took systematic form under the improved and reorganized Egyptian army in 1896, and the following year Kitchener's forces arrived before Khartoum, just in time, as we shall see in a later chapter.

The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan has proved to be a valuable colony, largely on account of its cotton lands. Great Britain first began to have an active interest in producing raw cotton for her factories in some colony as a result of the difficulties experienced during the Civil War. Large quantities are already produced in the Sudan, and much more can be produced. The only thing needed is water, and that water the Blue Nile, properly controlled, can furnish. We could close this discussion in no better way than by quoting from an avowed champion of British imperialism in Egypt and the Sudan:

"From the fact that Egypt receives her fertilizing waters from Abyssinia, which consequently lies within the Nile Basin, it follows that any European Power seeking to obtain a controlling influence over that country must be carefully watched, and if necessary effectually restrained from accepting concessions or exercising privileges that might conceivably interfere with the regime and functions of the Blue Nile and Atbara. Egypt must always, as a matter of self defense, be in a position to

3 Ibid., 180-82.
4 Ibid., 184.
dominate Abyssinia, either directly or indirectly. 5

During the years immediately preceding the Mahdist uprising King John of Abyssinia fought with considerable success against the Egyptians, who had been encroaching on his territory. 6 During the uprising he signed an agreement with Sir William Hewett, agreeing to co-operate in the evacuation of the Egyptian garrisons from the Sudan. 7 In fact, John's armies made cause with the British and Egyptians against the hated Moslems, and as we have already seen, it was in battle against the Dervishes that the Emperor lost his life.

This brief, but needed, summary will serve to show the main reason why the British became interested in Abyssinia after about 1880. For the rest of the story we must turn from the Egyptian Sudan to the Somaliland coast.

Although her interest in the cotton lands of Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was the principal reason for the renewed interest of Great Britain in Abyssinia, some developments in Somaliland at about the same time were another important contributing factor. Somaliland is a geographic region in eastern Africa, which receives its name from the people called Somalis who inhabit it. It is triangular in shape, the apex of the triangle being at Cape Guardafui. From this cape it extends westward and northwestward along the Gulf of Aden over 600 miles to the Tajura Bay; on the opposite side it extends southeastward along the shores of the Indian Ocean about 1200 miles to the equator. In general the whole region is a vast plateau.

5 Arthur S. White, The Expansion of Egypt, 29. (1899). The whole of this book is worth reading to get the viewpoint of an imperialistic writer at a time when imperialism was at its height. Another useful book, especially on the Sudan, past and present, is Percy F. Martin's The Sudan in Evolution.
6 Judge, op. cit., 621-23.
7 White, op. cit., 398.
of an average elevation of about 3,000 feet, extending back from the sea to the Ethiopian and Galla highlands. The temperatures are high the year around and the rainfall seasonal and scant except near the equator.

The population is sparse, estimated at something less than two million. The Somali tribesmen are principally warlike nomadic herdsmen, belonging to the Eastern Hamitic family. Many travelers speak of them as being treacherous and unreliable. They have never been under the effective control of any Ethiopian Emperor.

A glance at the map will show the strategic importance of the west Somaliland coast to the British after the opening of the Suez Canal. It will also reveal its importance as an outlet for the trade of Ethiopia, although we regret that this was never of a very great volume.

Certain points on the coast of the Red Sea had long been the termini for caravan routes leading out from the interior of Africa. The main traders were the Arabs. As early as 1849 Dr. Charles Beke, a noted British scholar and Abyssinian explorer, urged the possibilities of valuable commerce in Somaliland and the coasts of the Red Sea. Although meeting with no success in official quarters, he continued to make his representations. In 1862 he presented a long memorandum to the Foreign Office, summarizing his own efforts in the past and the possibilities for the future. He thought the possession of the shores of the Red Sea would secure the communication to India. His survey of the political status of these coast lands is significant. Geographically, from the

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8 This description of Somaliland and its people is taken mainly from The Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. 20, 955-69.
Straits of Bab-lmandab northward, they belonged to Abyssinia, but politically it had been centuries since Abyssinia had exercised any real rule over them. Since 1853 they had been under the nominal suzerainty of the Turks. Practically, they belonged to the chiefs of various native tribes, whom Abyssinia and Turkey both coerced whenever the opportunity arose. Beke said that the French had recently been active in these areas, largely from political motives, and thought they were encouraging Abyssinia to repossess them in order that they might themselves gain a foothold there, since the French could not, with very good grace, take lands directly from Turkey, who was supposed to be their ally. He further pointed out the commercial importance of Lassama, but thought that Suckin, farther north, had lately surpassed it. He urged the government to put a consul at the latter port, and lamented that Plowden and Cameron had not confined themselves to Lassama and the coast lands instead of going back into the interior of Abyssinia.

After the British had occupied Egypt, the French, pleased at having "muffed their chance" there, proceeded in other parts of Africa with complete liberty of action. France needed a strategic point on the route to the Far East, especially since Great Britain had closed the port of Aden to her during the Tonkin War of 1885. She had already purchased Obock on the Tajura Bay, opposite the Straits of Bab-lmandab (1869), and she now reasserted this claim. Not only was Tajura Bay a good strategic point, but it provided a good location from which to tap the commerce of the Abyssinian highland and possibly, to penetrate the valley of the upper Nile.

The race to partition the Red Sea littoral was now on. The Italians,

11 Ibid., 1171.
12 Ibid., 1172-73.
13 Ibid., 1176.
taking advantages of the claims of the Rubbatino Company immediately took
possession of Assab, just north of Tadjura Bay, thus cutting off French
expansion in that direction. 15

The British government, even though it was now in the hands of the
anti-imperialist Liberals, was forced to act to answer this challenge of
France and Italy to British supremacy over the Red Sea route to India.
Beginning July 14, 1884 and continuing till January 14, 1885, the British
agent at Aden made a series of treaties with the elders and chiefs of the
tribes inhabiting Somaliland east of Tadjura. 16 These treaties, identical
in wording, have four main provisions: (1) none of the territories in
question are ever to be ceded to any country except Great Britain; (2) Brit-
ish ships are to have free permission to trade at all ports; (3) the slave
traffic with the territories is to be suppressed; (4) British agents are
to be permitted in such parts of the domin as may be deemed necessary,
with a sufficient guard to protect them. In 1886 these chiefs and their
territories were formally taken “under Her Majesty's Gracious Protection”. 17
The British flag was raised at Zeila, and the French were thus cut off from
expansion to the east. To make up for their confinement the French soon
decided to build a railroad from Jibuti to the interior of Abyssinia, as
we shall see in another chapter. Zeila soon practically monopolized the
commerce with the rich Abyssinian city of Harar and held its advantage till
the end of the nineteenth century, in spite of the superior harbor of
Jibuti and the zeal of the numerous French fonctionnaires at that city.
It was realized, however, that the opening of the railroad from Jibuti
would make a radical change in the situation. 18 Differences having risen

15 Ibid., 21-22.
17 For treaties see Ibid., vol. 77, 1263-69.
18 Blundell, op. cit., 97-98.
over the boundary between the French and British protectorates, an agreement was signed in 1888 between H. Waddington and Lord Salisbury settling the dispute. Both parties agreed not to attempt to annex Harar, but did not renounce the right to oppose the attempts of any other Power to do so.

As no European nation had yet laid claim to the long strip of Somaliland coast bordering the Indian Ocean, the Italians soon took up this also. Border disputes between this colony and Ethiopian Somaliland were to be very troublesome in the future.

One gathering of the Powers during the period treated above is significant, the Congress at Berlin of 1884-1885. Recognizing that the partition of Africa was on in earnest, a sort of "referee's convention" was called to attempt to lay down some rules for the game. The result was the "General Act" of February 26, 1885. The only provision of interest to our present study is the sixth chapter, which we quote in full:

"Any Power which hence forth shall take possession of a territory on the coasts of Africa situated outside of her present possessions, or which so far having none shall undertake to acquire one, as well as any Power which shall assume a Protectorate there, shall accompany the respective act with a Notification addressed to the Signatories of this Act, in order to enable them to press, if there be reason, their claims.

"The Signatories of the present Act recognize their obligation to assure, in the territories they occupy, on the coasts of the continent of Africa, the maintenance of a sufficient authority to make their acquired rights respected and, if occasion offers, the freedom of trade and transit in case that it is stipulated." (Translation)

This rule seemed to legalize any sort of tactics so long as they were accompanied by an admission of their use. The strongest player could do anything he liked, no matter how unfair, if he warned his opponents of his

20 The entire text of the act is found in *State Papers*, vol. 76, 4-20.
intentions. In no case were the African pawns in the game ever warned or even considered.
Chapter Four

Great Britain Fails to Secure her Interests in Ethiopia through Italy

The partition of the Red Sea coasts and Somaliland discussed in the last chapter was only the prelude to more ambitious undertakings in the Ethiopian hinterland. It has been noted that Italy gained a foothold at Assab on Tajura Bay in 1884. The political status of the Red Sea littoral at that time has also been summarized. The particular strip wanted by the Italians was nominally under the control of Egypt, but Ethiopia had never recognized the Egyptian claims. At the time of which we are now treating, effective Egyptian occupation of this area was made difficult by the terrible Mahdist uprising. Italy saw a chance to expand her holdings to the north of Assab and early in 1885 her troops occupied the important port city of Massawa.\(^1\) This action was resented by both Johannes IV and King Menelik of Shoa. In the treaty already mentioned between Great Britain, Abyssinia, and Egypt of 1884,\(^2\) all goods, including arms and ammunition, going to or coming from Abyssinia had been guaranteed free passage through Massawa, under British protection. It seems certain that Great Britain approved of this move on the part of Italy. Lord Granville made the statement:

"I informed Count Negri the Italian Ambassador at London ... that if the Italian government should desire to occupy some of the ports in question, it was a matter between Italy and Turkey, but I was able to inform him that Her Majesty's Government, for their part, had no objection to

\(^1\) A very good account of the Italian attempt to secure Abyssinia, from the time of the seizure of Massawa to the defeat at Adowa is found in Ernest Work, Ethiopia, A Pawn in European Diplomacy, Chapters II, III. Professor Work has made a careful study of the Italian documents. The account in Leonard Woof, Empire and Commerce in Africa, Chapter V, is also valuable.

raise against the Italian possession of Zulla, Beilul, of Massowah."

The Italians would be useful to help check the Dervishes to the west, where they had so recently defeated General Gordon. The French attributed a more sinister motive to Britain's support of Italy. They regarded it as a deliberate attempt to checkmate their own plans for expansion through Abyssinia to the headwaters of the Nile, by preparing for an earlier occupation of the ancient empire by the Italians.

After taking over Massawa the Italians proceeded to annex other nearby points, and it soon became evident that they had designs on the interior of Ethiopia. At first they tried to convince Emperor Johannes that it was to his own best interests to further their designs, but they did not get very far on this course. Next, they tried to alienate King Menelik from the Emperor, but with hardly more success, although it is probably true that the intrigues of Count Antonelli, the Italian diplomat at Menelik's court, were beginning to bear some fruit when the whole situation was changed by the death of Johannes in 1889. Little did the Italians then know with what deadly effect the rifles given to Menelik at that time would be turned against them a few years later at Adowa. Upon the death of Johannes, the Shoa king, who was beyond a doubt the most powerful of the Wasse in Abyssinia, proclaimed himself Negus Negast, in accordance with an agreement made earlier between him and the late Emperor. He then proceeded to bring the rulers who showed signs of defection into submission.

Count Antonelli now proceeded to secure the new Negus Negast's signature to a document which he had previously been attempting to persuade him to sign as King of Shoa. This document was the famous Tract of

4 Work, op. cit., 59-60.
5 Ibid., 78-80.
Ucciali (May 2, 1896). It was a treaty of commerce and friendship. Two or three articles only need concern us here. Article III provided for a boundary commission, consisting of two Italians and two Ethiopians to work out the boundaries between the Italian and the Ethiopian possessions according to certain general stipulations laid down in the text. Italians were to be given preference, if any special privileges were ever granted, in the establishment of houses of commerce or manufacture in Ethiopia. But the article which was to cause the trouble was article XVII. The English translation of the Italian text reads as follows:

"His Majesty the King of Kings of Ethiopia consents to avail himself of the Italian Government for any negotiations which he may enter into with the other Powers or Governments."

This, of course, was equivalent to the recognition of an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. On the other hand an English translation of the Amharic wording of the same article reads, "may avail himself of". The vital difference is evident. The treaty provided that the Italian and the Amharic versions should have equal authority. It was not till after the document had been sent to Italy for ratification that Menelik became aware of this obvious piece of Italian deception.

Anxious to inform the other Powers of her triumph in the new game of "protect Africa", Italy lost little time in notifying them of her protectorate over Abyssinia. Great Britain accepted the situation without demur, and the Second Edition of Hertslet's Map of Africa by Treaty in 1896 showed the kingdom of the Negus, which had never before bowed to foreign domination in the color of Italy. The map-makers of Europe, how-

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6 This treaty may be found in Hertslet, Map of Africa by Treaty, 3rd edn., vol. 2, 454-55.
7 October 12, 1899. See Ibid., 457.
8 Work, op. cit., 96.
ever, had practiced their cartography without reckoning with Menelik. Roused from his slumbers by the perfidy of his false friend, now turned his hunter, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah became vigilant to safeguard the independence of his empire. Both in Rome and in the capitals of Europe he made it known in no uncertain terms that the Ethiopian desired protection from no one, while at home he began to marshal his troops to oust the invaders.

Meanwhile, let us see how the leading colonial power made sure of her own interests in Abyssinia and the surrounding territories without offending Italy, to whom she was particularly friendly during this period. In 1890 Britain made a treaty with Germany settling many of the differences which had caused friction between them in Africa. By this agreement a line was drawn between the British and the German spheres of influence in East Africa. Both Powers recognized Italy’s protectorate in Abyssinia and Gallaland. This was followed the next year by an even more significant series of protocols between Great Britain and Italy. A line between the British and the Italian spheres of influence was drawn, starting on the Indian Ocean at the mouth of the Juba and up this river to the parallel of 6° north latitude; west on this parallel to the meridian of 37° east longitude; north on this meridian to the waters of the Blue Nile; thence, by various boundaries to Ras Kasar on the Red Sea. The Italians also agreed to construct no irrigation work on the Atbara, an eastern affluent of the Blue Nile. Evidently the British did not yet realize the superior importance of the Atbai, or Blue Nile proper; then, too, the agricultural possibilities of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan were not yet fully known.

9 State Papers, vol. 32, 35-47.
10 Ibid., 38.
In addition to the above protocols the same two Powers signed another on May 5, 1894, which contained a significant provision in regard to the Harar. This was the secret "Note Officiœuse Annexée à Protocole", which recognized the Italian sphere of influence in this rich province. When news of the secret leaked out, the French, who had designs on Harar themselves, protested against Britain's betrayal of the agreement of 1888, already referred to. It is true that the secret article, within itself, did not technically violate the Anglo-French agreement, but the French claimed to have knowledge of another secret understanding between the foreign offices of Rome and London, by which Great Britain was to have for herself a sphere of influence in the coveted province in the event that the Italians could not make their own sphere effective. 12 When we remember the British French rivalry for the commerce of Harar to Tadjurah Bay, this bit of by-play seems all the more probable. As a matter of fact, no one of the three intriguing Powers controlled the Harar; it was still in the hands of Menelik.

Thus, we see that Italy had obtained the consent of two of the Great Powers, Great Britain and Germany, to her protectorate over Ethiopia. France, she had not secured, and that nation, which must have felt rather badly misused at the time, gave every encouragement to the indignant Menelik to resist the aggressor. And resisthe did. The eternal feudal warfare, which had always been the bane of Ethiopian unity, ceased; disloyalty to the Emperor melted away, and on March 1, 1896 on the mountains around Adowa the Italian army was crushingly defeated by a numerically superior force of Abyssinians. Thus perished for forty years Italian hopes of a

12 For the "Note Officiœuse" see Woolf, op. cit., 227. Mr. Woolf does not think the above mentioned secret understanding between Great Britain and Italy ever existed, but Mr. Work, p.252, seems to us to have had access to more conclusive evidence.
great colonial empire in East Africa, and thus did the ancient mountain
kingdom again successfully defend her independence against the foreigner.

The defeat of the Italians at Adowa was a serious setback to British
imperial schemes in the valley of the upper Nile. It is significant to
note that a year before Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett, in a debate in the House
of Commons, had stated that "...the future establishment of British Dom-
inion over the Nile waterway, and the civilization of all those countries,
depended on a cordial co-operation between Italy and Great Britain in
those regions."13 He referred to Italy as our ally. Now, however, the
Italians could not longer draw British chestnuts out of the fire at the
expense of the French and the Mahdists.

It would be well to summarize briefly the British colonial situation
in central Africa at the beginning of the eventful year 1894. In doing
this, one should not forget the importance of the cape-to-Cairo railroad
project in helping formulate British policy.14 Great Britain still had
to make good her claims to the Egyptian Sudan and the headwaters of the
Nile, secure Uganda, and make sure in some way of a strip of territory
between Lakes Albert Edward and Tanganyika.15 This accomplished, the cov-
eted continuous strip of red from Alexandria to Capetown would be a reality.
The French policy was just as definitely to run a strip of purple across
the map from the Atlantic Ocean, through the French Congo, the Bahr-el-
Ghazal and Abyssinia to the Somaliland coast. So far, due to their agree-
ments earlier in the decade with Germany and Italy, the British seemed to
have their rivals fairly well blocked.

In 1894 they proceeded to make the French blockade even more solid

13 The Parliamentary Debates, Authorized Edition, Fourth Series,
vol. XXXII, 393.
14 Leonard Woolf, Empire and Commerce in Africa, 182.
15 Ibid., 183.
and to secure their own coveted middle African corridor by two clever strokes of policy. The first was the conclusion with King Leopold II, as master of the Congo Free State, of a treaty by which he was leased the Bahr-el-Ghazal territory, obviously a move to put a friendly Power in a region which they could not themselves at the moment conveniently occupy. In return Leopold leased to the British a narrow strip of territory from the Egyptian Sudan to Lake Tanganyika. The corridor for the railway seemed to be secure. Shortly after this treaty was signed the British flag was raised over Uganda. 16

The French press and government raised a violent protest against the Anglo-Congolese Treaty and declared they would disregard it. In the face of so much opposition Great Britain backed down on the provision relating to the corridor. A little later King Leopold agreed that he would never avail himself of the Bahr-el-Ghazal concession. 17 For the moment France seemed to be riding triumphantly in the saddle, but it should be emphasized that the British never recognized Leopold's repudiation of his Sudan claim as meaning that the French could thereby lay any claim to it. Nor did it remove in any way the obstructions placed in the path of French expansion by the Anglo-German and the Anglo-Italian agreements. Unduly enthusiastic over their seeming ascendancy, the French proceeded to ride fast and hard for the headwaters of the Nile, too fast, for the horse soon met a barrier he did not care to attempt to jump. Three expeditions were planned to converge in the coveted territory. The first was the sending of H. Liotard as Government commissioner to the upper Ubangi, the furthest extent of

16 Ibid., 185. A good account of the British reconquest of the Sudan and of the Mashoda crisis is found in this work, 178-95. Work, op. cit., Chapter IV, is equally good and even more detailed. See also ibid., op. cit., 144-54, and Cambridge Hist. of British Foreign Policy, vol. III, 242-58. The accounts all agree in the main.

17 Woolf, op. cit., 186.
French Congo claims, with instructions to extend French influence as far as the Nile. Two more missions, one under Lieutenant Mizon and the other under Captain Ulochette, were dispatched to Abyssinia with orders to penetrate to the Nile. Further than that, a French trading company procured a concession from Emperor Menlik to build a railroad from Jibuti to Harar and through Addis Ababa to the White Nile. Truly commerce would follow the flag! In return for this favor the French furnished Menlik's army with ammunition, and French officers drilled his soldiers. 18

News of these doings soon leaked out in England, and on March 28, 1895 the whole affair was given a thorough airing in the House of Commons. 19 Sir E. Ashmead-Bartlett rose to ask about the rumored expedition to the headwaters of the Nile. He thought the policy the Government had not been quite firm enough. The Power which held the upper Nile held Egypt at its mercy. He believed France meant to use such control to force the British out of Egypt. 20 Supporting Sir Ashmead-Bartlett, Major Darwin said he did not believe the doctrine of effective occupation before assertion of political sovereignty ought to apply to central Africa. Major Darwin thought the British must dominate the Nile for several hundred miles above Khartum. 21

The Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Edward Grey, then rose to answer these members of the Opposition. He had heard of the expeditions mentioned, and communication had already been made to France in regard to them. While he did not believe they should be taken seriously as signs of French aggression, he agreed with the Opposition as to British interests in the Nile valley:

"... the advance of a French expedition under secret instructions right from the other side of Africa, into a territory over

16 Ibid., 186-97.
20 Ibid., 391.
21 Ibid., 396; 398.
which our claims have been known for so long, would be not merely an inconsistent act, but it must be perfectly well-known to the French Government that it would be an unfriendly act, and would so be viewed by England."  

Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, a known champion of imperialism, concurred fully with the statements of the Under Secretary. The only opposition to all these somewhat jingoistic speeches came from Mr. H. Labouchere, who attacked Sir Edward Grey for the violence of his language. After all, what right had England on the upper Nile more than France? What title deeds could Sir Edward produce for this territory? He, himself, was against the occupation of Egypt and thought it should be withdrawn. But Mr. Labouchere was censured for being an agent of France. There is no doubt as to what the attitude of most of official Britain was toward the French aggressions.

Whether or not it was in deference to this warning, France soon curbed the steed sharply. All expeditions to the Nile were postponed or diverted into other channels. Great Britain was again in the ascendency, but only temporarily.

On March 1, 1896 came the defeat of "our ally" at Adowa. There can be no doubt that French aid contributed very materially to the Abyssinian victory. The subsequent withdrawal of Italy from her shortlived protectorate rendered useless the Anglo-Italian agreements of 1881 and 1894. Great Britain saw that she must block France's plans on the headwaters of the Nile, must block them without Italian aid, and must do it quickly. Less than two weeks after Adowa, General Kitchner was ordered to occupy Dongola, a very important point in the Egyptian Sudan. This order meant that after ten years of extreme caution the British were really going to put

22 Ibid., 406-06.  
23 Ibid., 416-19.  
24 Hoyle, op. cit., 130.  
25 Ibid., 130.
down the Dervishes in earnest and effectively re-occupy the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Upon learning of this plan, the French hurriedly revived their late abandoned expeditions to the Nile. Captain Marchand was dispatched from the Congo. Captain Clochette and L. Bouvalot were ordered from Abyssinia to effect a junction with him on the White Nile. The race was in all seriousness; an empire extending across the continent of Africa was the stake.

The result is a matter of common knowledge. General Kitchener, not hampered by the vague instructions and lack of support which had been the lot of General Gordon, gave the Dervish Army a crushing defeat at Omdurman, then proceeded to Fashoda, where on September 18, 1898 he met Captain Marchand and his heroic, but small body of troops. He who gets there with the larger army is always the winner. Diplomatic exchanges were fast and furious, but Great Britain, relying on her superior armed force at Fashoda, refused to give in an inch. Marchand was recalled, and the two contending powers settled their differences in an agreement of March 21, 1899, which was eminently satisfactory to British imperialists. To quote from an outstanding authority:

"The real symbol of the triumph of British imperialism in the Nile Valley was, however, not Fashoda, but the Anglo-French declaration of March 21, 1899. By this declaration the frontier between the British Sudan and the French Equatorial Africa was defined in a way that the whole of the Bahr-el-Ghazal, the Nile Valley, and the Darfur became British territory. France thus abandoned all claim to a foothold in the Egyptian Sudan or the banks of the Nile: the dream of a solid block of French empire from Somaliland to the Congo was destroyed, and Rhodes' Mittel-Africa--with the exception of the gap between Lakes Albert Edward and Tanganyika--became an accomplished fact."28

The Egyptian Sudan territory was secure, but the Blue Nile, main life-line of this territory was not yet secure; so to the consideration of how Great Britain accomplished that we turn in the next chapter.

26 Ibid., 190.  28 Woolf, op. cit., 195.
27 For this agreement see State Papers, vol. 91, 55ff.
Chapter Five

Great Britain Secures the Life Line of Egypt
and the Sudan — The Blue Nile

The defeat of the Italians at Adowa and the temporary ascendancy of the French in Abyssinia caused the British to return to direct negotiations at the court of the Emperor. Then, too, the victory of his troops made Menelik II a sovereign to be respected. The British policy of re-occupying the Sudan after March, 1896, made it doubly necessary for them to secure the headwaters of the Blue Nile against any hostile Power. Accordingly a mission led by Sir Rennell Rodd was sent to Addis Ababa in 1897. France also sent a mission and several of the other countries of Europe, and the year 1897 saw much diplomatic intrigue in the capital of the monarch who had raised his Empire to a position of dignity and importance. It was natural that France, the Power which had so lately befriended Menelik, should be at first the most successful. The railroad concession previously mentioned was now modified and made over to a French Compagnie Imperiale des Chemins de Fer Ethiopiens. Construction was begun at once. We should keep in mind that this took place before French hopes were eclipsed at Fashoda.

Rodd secured a treaty which did not seem to mean much, but at least it did something toward making a beginning of renewed friendly relations between the Queen and the Negus. By this treaty the boundary between Ethiopia and British Somaliland was established. The Emperor also agreed to prohibit the passage through his territory of arms to the Mahdists.

1 Woolf, op. cit., 196-201.
Of the more important boundary between Ethiopia and the Egyptian Sudan, nothing was said.

Economic imperialism goes quietly on, even when political imperialism receives a check. A group of British capitalists gradually obtained a considerable interest in the Compagnie Impériale des Chemins de Fer Éthiopiens. It began to look as if the French were going to lose control of the Ethiopian railroad just as they had lost the Suez Canal nearly thirty years previously. An appeal was made to the French government, and the government came to the financial rescue of the company. The new arrangement, however, gave the government considerable control over the road; in fact, it looked as if there was considerable danger that the independence of Ethiopia might be infringed upon. The French should have profited by the earlier experience of the Italians. Economic concessions Menelik would grant, but not political ones. It is very likely that this move on the part of the French government cost them their position of influence at Addis Ababa. Like the Italians, they had overreached themselves.3

In an earlier chapter the importance of the Abai or Blue Nile to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was recognized. The lines for British policy in regard to this matter were laid down in the four or five years following the establishment of the Condominium in the Sudan in 1899. They have never been departed from since. The British had more interest in the development of the great territory south of Egypt proper than the Egyptians did themselves; certainly they exercised more than half the political control over it. It is true that the Sudan was not expected to be immediately profitable. There had been too many years of warfare with its

resulting depopulation and impoverishment of the country. Some of the far-sighted men in the Egyptian government, however, saw much hope for the future; they laid their plans accordingly. It was recognized that the only way Egypt's Sudanese appendage could ever be made to pay its own way was by introducing an extensive system of irrigation. Irrigation, of a kind, had been practiced for centuries in Egypt proper, that narrow and very thickly populated strip of alluvial lands closely bordering the main stream of the Nile; but the Sudan was as yet virgin territory. The Egyptians had long been growing cotton, but the Sudan produced little besides wild plants and grasses. Between the Blue Nile and the White Nile, with its apex at Khartum, lay the plains of the Gezira, a great triangle of the most fertile alluvial soil in the world. As early as 1904 British scientists and engineers realized that the Gezira was an ideal region in which to practice canal irrigation. It has, indeed, a distinct advantage over the lands below the junction of the two rivers--it is in the savannah rain belt in summer, at which time crops can be grown without extra water. In the winter, when Egypt proper does not draw so heavily from the supply in the Nile, the Gezira can tap it for the cotton crop. The experts early realized that the waters of the White Nile and its tributaries should be impounded to increase the supply for Egypt, and that those of the Blue Nile should be used for the Sudan. The Egyptian farmers have

4 Earl of Cromer, in a report by Sir William Garstin on "The Basin of the Upper Nile" (1904), IX-X. The entire report should be read for a comprehensive survey of the irrigation possibilities of the upper Nile basin and the official attitude toward them. See Od. 2165, (1904).

5 Ibid., 210.

6 Parliamentary Debates, vol. 175, 2513; 2535.

7 Od. 2165 (1904), VII. Expert opinion is still the same in regard to this matter.
always been jealous of any sluicing off of their water supply further up the river, thus the explanation for the interest in the Sudan irrigation project being primarily from the European partner in the Condominium. The report of the Under-Secretary of State for Public Works, Sir William Garstin, shows that it was not expected that irrigation works to benefit the Sudan could be completed or would be practical in less than ten or fifteen years at the earliest. But irrigated the Sudan must be. The experts were also agreed that the most suitable place for impounding the waters of the Blue Nile was at or near the point where it issued from Lake Tsana:

"There can be no question that by far the best and most certain method of increasing the Blue Nile supply during the months prior to the annual rise would be the construction of regulating works at the outlet of the river from the Tsana Lake, using the latter as a storage reservoir under effective control." 11

"As a reservoir for the Blue Nile feeding canals irrigating the Gezira and the rich lands to the east of that river in the Sudan, the suitability of Lake Tsana is so great and obvious that it seems almost inevitable that sooner or later in the world's history some solution of the political difficulties must be found and advantage taken of it." 12

The "political difficulties" were one—namely Abyssinia!

"Without the cordial support of the King and local races, emphasized by some show of force, I have no doubt that the work would be quite impossible, and it would certainly be unwise to attempt it except after a complete understanding on all points." 13

There is no doubt that the British recognized the immense possibilities for future development in their newly acquired ward. That some of them, at least, did not let their dream stop at the southern frontier of the Sudan, is shown by the following statement at the end of an article written by a traveler who accompanied Captain J. L. Harrington to Addis..

8 See the debate in the House of Commons, July 10, 1924, Parliamentary Debates, Vol. 175, 2503-2552.
9 Cmd. 2165 (1904), VII.
10 Ibid., 166.
11 Ibid., 155.
12 Ibid., 225.
13 Ibid.
Ababa, and from thence penetrated to the Nile:

"We have here for no less than ten degrees of latitude an immense range of country [Abbyssinia] whose products are among the most valuable on earth—cotton, coffee, tobacco, and iron, copper, and gold, with a healthy climate and above all an industrious population, with nothing wanted but greater inducements and improved communications to be brought within the circle of British commercial enterprise and developed to the highest degree of prosperity.

"The Cape-to-Cairo railway has generally been associated in the minds with the course of the Nile, but it is gradually being realized that this, in a great tract of country between latitude 6° and 10°, is not much better than an immense reservoir and can scarcely be reckoned as a waterway. The railroad and telegraph will both have to leave the great catchment basin of the Nile and tap the resources of the whole western side of Abyssinia to the Atbara. If we compare these frontier lands with the Sudan proper, I do not think it would be too much to say that there is more hope of prosperity and trade outside the Sudan than in it. The climate, soil, population, the capabilities of the great rich region of Galla land that has lately fallen under the dominion of Abyssinia will some day prove a great accession, not only to the wealth of Abyssinia, but to bordering countries. We may safely say an era has opened that gives hopes of a greater destiny than has ever been the lot of these harassed regions in the stormy past, but we may add that the essential condition is a good and settled government, and that this is synonymous with friendly relations between the two powers, Great Britain and Abyssinia. In King Menelik we have as a neighbor a far seeing and enlightened ruler, whose consolidated and extended empire we should regard with a perfectly friendly eye, so long as under its guidance it continues to advance along the path of peaceful progress and development." 14

This statement, it seems to us, contains several significant points.

Mr. Garstin wondered if the labor problem of the depopulated Sudan might not be solved by encouraging the Gallas to emigrate there. 15

The way for more friendly relations between Great Britain and Ethiopia having been paved by the treaty of 1897, Mr. J. L. Harrington was sent as a representative to Addis Ababa, where he looked out for the interests of his government in a very efficient manner. The French loss of favor at Menelik's court due to the new turn given the railroad cession was a

15 Id., 2165, (1904), 165.
British gain. Shortly afterwards Harrington was able to make a treaty with Menelik which gave the British almost all they had ever wanted in Abyssinia.

This treaty was signed May 15, 1902. Article I settled the boundary between Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Ethiopia by a line even more satisfactory to the British than the line earlier agreed upon with Italy. Article III pledged Ethiopia not to construct nor to allow to be constructed any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tsana, or the Sobat except in agreement with the British government. Article IV provided for commercial penetration by permitting the British to establish a commercial station in or near Itang on the Baro River, a tributary of the Sobat. Article V allowed the British to build a railway through western Ethiopia to connect the Sudan with Uganda.

As the immediate object of the British government was simply to make safe the headwaters of the Blue Nile from any hostile power, and not to construct any irrigation work themselves, it will be seen that this treaty fully safeguarded the British interests.

By this time it was apparent to the three interested Powers that it was not going to be possible for any of them to appropriate peaceably the whole of Ethiopia; therefore they did the thing usually done by contending great nations when they fight to a draw over some "backward country". They made a treaty among themselves, without even consulting Menelik, which, under the guise of protecting the independence of Ethiopia, really provided for the securing of their own special interests in a way that could not but impair Ethiopian sovereignty. This treaty was signed by Earl Grey,

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16 For the full text of this very important treaty see State Papers, vol. 95, 467-69.
Paul Cambon, and A. De San Guilliano, December 13, 1906. It should be carefully studied by any one who seeks the key to the recent attitude of the three Powers toward Abyssinia. Its purpose was to maintain the integrity of Ethiopia intact, but to provide for common action in case of a change in the internal status quo. Article I is the most significant:

"France, Great Britain, and Italy agree to maintain the political and territorial status quo in Ethiopia, according to the present existing state of affairs and the following arrangements:--"

The "arrangements" deserve careful notice, especially numbers "a" and "c". The former is,

"The Anglo-Italian Protocols of March 24, and April 14, 1891 and of May 15, 1894, and the subsequent arrangements which have modified them, here understood to mean the reservations formulated by the French Government on this subject in 1894 and 1895."

It should be remembered that during those years Ethiopia was considered in England to be an Italian protectorate.

The latter arrangement is "The Anglo-French arrangement of 1883". (With its provision concerning the Harar). It will be seen at once that none of the Powers gave up one iota of the rights or claims it had gained in previous years. Of course it is piously stated that these arrangements do not prejudice the sovereign rights of the Emperor, and in the same breath that neither do they take precedence over the present arrangement!

The language of a diplomatic document may salve the feelings of the Power it is reducing to subjection, but its meaning is usually clear. There seems no doubt as to the meaning of this document.

Article III states that in case of internal troubles in Ethiopia the Powers will remain neutral or will not intervene except after arriving at an understanding among themselves. In any case, goes on Article IV, they will act to safeguard their special interests, especially:
(a) "The interests of Great Britain and Egypt in the Nile and more especially those which concern the regulating of the flow of this river and its affluents;"

and (b) "The interests of Italy in Ethiopia with regard to Eritrea and the Somaliland (here meaning Benadir), and more especially those which concern the hinterland of these possessions and the territorial union between them to the west of Addis Ababa." 17

Then follow several provisions relating to railroads either in process of construction or to be constructed in and across Ethiopia.

The troublesome road from Jibuti to Addis Ababa was to be prolonged to Dire Dawa by the Compagnie Impériale or another private French Company, but the road was to be open equally to the commerce of all nations, and Jibuti was made a free port. Englishmen and Italians were to be on the boards of directors of any railroads constructed by the French and Frenchmen, on the boards of any roads constructed by the Italians or the English. Any railroad to the west of Addis Ababa was to be built by Great Britain, and any tying together Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, by Italy. Further than that, Great Britain was to have the right to construct a line from British Somaliland to the Sudan, in accordance with an agreement with Menelik signed August 26, 1904.

The treaty ends with the usual article by which the Powers agree to keep one another informed for the protection of their mutual interests. 18

This treaty, so far as Great Britain was concerned, put the final cap on her Egyptian and Ethiopian policy. The treaty of 1902 secured the recognition of her special interests by Menelik; the one of 1906 secured their recognition by each of the other great Powers who might cause trouble. It seemed to eliminate the possibility of France ever securing political concessions in Ethiopia, but paved the way for Great Britain and Italy.

17 Italics are mine.
18 The French text of this three Power treaty, of which translations are given above, is found in State Papers, vol. 99, 436-89.
So far as the ancient empire itself was concerned, its independence in the future was entirely at the mercy of the Great Powers.
Chapter Six

Ethiopia Loses Her Independence, but Great Britain
Retains Her Sphere of Influence

After the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 Ethiopia enjoyed thirty
more years of independence at the pleasure of the signatories, while
most of the world forgot that her liberty had even been threatened.
Although this chapter should probably give most space to the period
1934 - 1936, there were several important events and developments in
the twenty-eight years previous which need to be summarized.

First, the political changes in the Empire itself: upon the death
of the able and respected Menelik in 1913, his grandson, Ledj Iyesu, took
the throne. This young man was dissolute and unprincipled; moreover, he
made the fatal mistake of flirting with Islam. He could not hold the
allegiance of the strong provincial rulers as had his grandfather, and
all the work which Menelik had done to make the authority of the central
government supreme was largely undone. In 1916 the abuna, supported by
the rebel princes, deposed the apostate monarch and declared the Princess
Zawditu, daughter of Menelik, Queen, and Ras Tafari heir to the throne.¹

Although the Queen and the Regent did not see eye to eye on all
matters, there were no serious differences between them. Zawditu had
more the support of the conservative and reactionary elements in the
Empire, and Tafari more the support of the liberal and enlightened ele-
ments.² The Queen was very devoted to the memory of her father and the
things for which he had stood. As to Ras Tafari, he also carried on in
the tradition of his able and enlightened father, Ras Makonnen, trusted

¹ See Budge, op. cit., 542-43.
² Ibid., 547-48.
friend of Menelik. He is a man of good education, a tireless worker, and wholeheartedly devoted to the best interests of Ethiopia; prior to 1934, he believed his country's welfare could best be promoted, not by granting economic concessions to European countries which would endanger Ethiopian independence, but by adopting the best in western culture and applying it gradually to his own antique civilization. He succeeded in restoring some of the authority of the central government, so badly weakened by the rebellions against his worthless predecessor. All the accounts of impartial travelers, observers at his court, and historians agree in praising Ras Tafari's good intentions and considerable ability. His task was a hard one, but these impartial observers seem to think he was making noteworthy progress. They all speak of him as being a true, courteous Christian gentleman. His willingness to co-operate in the most advanced movement for securing better international relations and world peace was shown by his application for membership for Ethiopia in the League of Nations, which was accepted in 1923. One cannot help feeling that Ras Tafari was just a little too enlightened, a little too able, a little too zealous for his country to please the interested Great Powers, who would have approved more heartily of a less energetic and incorruptible monarch on the throne of the Conquering Lion of Judah. He was crowned King (Negus) in October, 1923, and upon the death of Queen Zawditu took the title of Emperor (Negus Negest) as Haile Selassie I in November, 1930.

To return to the British and their interests in Ethiopia after 1906—we have already noted that the Tripartite Agreement of that year secured recognition by the other two Powers of the special sphere of British influence. We have also noted that the British did not contemplate any immediate construction of works on the Blue Nile in order to irrigate the Egyptian Sudan, but that they did definitely plan such works in the not too
distant future. Under the able management of the Sudan Government, the Sudan budget was made to balance in 1913 without any grant in aid from Egypt. Local experiments in growing cotton by irrigation were started in the Gezira at about the same time. The railway was pushing south from Khartum. It was proposed to irrigate 100,000 faddans (acres) of land by canal fed by the flow of the Blue Nile. This would necessitate the building of a storage dam. The project, however, like many another, was cut short by the coming of the World War. The Egyptian government simultaneously contemplated a dam on the White Nile at Gebel Aulia, near Khartum. It, too, was delayed by the war, but some work was actually done from 1917 to 1920. As yet this Egyptian project has not been completed, while work on the dam in the Blue Nile at Makmur (the Sennar Dam) was begun late in 1922, prosecuted vigorously, and finished three years later. Of course the British were more interested in the Sennar work than they were in the one at Khartum.

The waters impounded by this dam were available for the cotton growing season of 1926. A few figures will illustrate its importance. In 1919 the total area of lands under cotton cultivation, including rainlands, irrigated lands, and floodlands, was only 59,076 faddans. In 1922 it was 84,273 faddans.

In 1926 the total area leaped to 164,265 faddans, the 100,000 faddan increase being largely accounted for by the newly opened irrigated lands in the Gezira. The largest acreage to date seems to have been reached in 1928 at 258,014. The government reports from the Sudan testify uniformly to the success of the Gezira project, while admitting that the economic

4 Cmd. 3548 (1929), 8.
5 See the annual reports on the Sudan, especially Cmd. 2281 (1924); Cmd. 2742 (1926); Cmd. 3284 (1929); Cmd. 3403 (1923)
depression after 1929 has had its bad effects. That all the available lands are not yet in use is shown by the fact that a total of 300,000 feddans was canalized in the Gezira Plain in 1925, and that the concession was later increased to 450,000 feddans. The growing and marketing of the cotton is carried on by a tripartite partnership, consisting of the native farmers, the Sudan Plantations Syndicate, and the British Government. In the year 1927 the total exports of the Egyptian Sudan were valued at more than £5,000,000, of which the cotton crop accounted for more than one half. Great Britain takes all of this product. She also supplies more than one third of the imports of the colony. Here, it seems, is a perfect example of economic imperialism.

This imperialism in the Sudan was not long in extending its long fingers to the mountainous tableland of Abyssinia. True, direct trade from that country to Great Britain, or to any other European market continued to be small. Mr. A. D. Home, the British consul in Addis Ababa, in making his report for 1911-1912 estimated the total foreign trade of the Empire to be about one and one half million pounds. Of this, by far, the major portion was through French Somaliland, though the railroad from Jibuti, was not yet completed to the Ethiopian capital. British Somaliland ran a poor third. For the decade 1924-1934 the average annual exports of Ethiopia averaged only 26,000 metric tons, and her imports only 21,000 metric tons. Of these imports, it is very interesting to notice, Japan furnished nearly two thirds (62.5%) and all the countries of Europe combined only 13.6%. The railway to Addis Ababa was finally completed, but not a foot of track was laid of all the roads contemplated in the

7 Cmd., 3204 (1929), 33.  
8 Cmd., 2742 (1926), 5.  
9 Britannica, vol. 21, 507.  
10 Cmd., 5163, (1912), 4.  
11 MacCallum, op. cit., 50.
treaty of 1906. In fact there were not even any roads or highways for
wheeled vehicles of any kind outside the capital city in the whole Empire.
Such trade as went on was by pack mule and camel. But in spite of its
backwardness Ethiopia still offered alluring economic temptations to the
imperialists of Europe. She was a diamond in the rough.

The British had not forgotten the desirability of a barrage across
the mouth of Lake Tsana, and with the Gezira scheme rapidly nearing con-
summation the time for merely safeguarding this lake against hostile Powers
and, for the beginning of more active measures looking to the immediate con-
struction of the work seemed at hand. The favorable report of Mr. Dupuis
in 1903 had been confirmed in 1920 by a mission under Messrs. G. W. Grabham
and K. P. Black, sent out by the Egyptian Ministry of Public Works. In
1924 Sir Ramsay MacDonald had conversations in regard to the project with
Ras Tafari, who was then visiting in England. The Regent was not at that
time favorable to any of the plans set forth. He was naturally suspicious
of any encroachments on the integrity of his country that might result from
the granting of economic concessions. It seems to have been the intention
of the Ethiopian Government to construct such a work themselves, if any
was constructed. The Labor Government in Britain which carried on these
conversations having failed, the succeeding Conservative Government resorted
in 1925 to tactics, that, however ably defended, smacked strongly of the
"old diplomacy". These negotiations, which brought forth so much criticism
when aired in Parliament, are worth some examination.

Admitting that negotiations so far at Addis Ababa had met with failure,
Sir R. Graham wrote to Signor Mussolini, December 14, 1925 referring to an
Italian overture of November, 1919:

13 Ibid., vol. 240, 379.
"In view of the predominating interests of Great Britain in the control of the waters of Lake Tsana, Italy offers Great Britain her support, in order that she may obtain from Ethiopia the concession to carry out the works of barrage in the lake itself, within the Italian sphere of influence, pending the delimitation of the extent of the territorial zone to be recognized as pertaining to Great Britain in respect of the latter's predominant hydraulic interests and pending a just consideration of the reservation in behalf of Italy by the Tripartite Agreement 1906 likewise in respect of her hydraulic interests. Italy further offers her support to Great Britain that the latter may obtain from Ethiopia the right to construct and maintain a motor road between Lake Tsana and the Sudan.

"Italy requests the support of Great Britain in order that she may obtain from the Ethiopian Government the concession to construct and run a railway from the frontier of Eritrea to the frontier of Italian Somaliland; which railway, according to the Tripartite Agreement must pass to the west of Addis Ababa..."

"Italy requests from Great Britain, as she also reserves to herself the right to request from France, an exclusive economic influence in the west of Ethiopia, and in the whole of the territory to be crossed by the above mentioned railway, and promise to support with the Ethiopian Government all requests for economic concessions regarding the Italian zone." 14

At that time, Sir K. Graham goes on, the British Government did not entertain the proposal of her late ally, because they objected to a foreign power obtaining any sort of a concession over the Nile headwaters. But now the Government have decided that the proposal is not inimical to their interests, nor contrary to the spirit of the Tripartite Agreement; therefore they agree to it and declare themselves willing to make representations at Addis Ababa on that basis. 15 It seems more than a mere coincidence that the Government's sudden conversion came at the very time that direct conversations with Ethiopia had met with refusal.

The reference to the Italian proposals of 1919 is significant. These proposals were no doubt in regard to the carrying out of Article 13 of a secret treaty: 16

14 Cmnd. 2620 (1926), 2-3.
15 Ibid., 3.
"In the event that France and Great Britain increase their colonial territories in Africa at the expense of Germany, those two Powers agree in principle that Italy may claim some equitable compensation, particularly as regards the settlement in her favor of questions relative to the frontiers of the colonies of Eritrea and Somaliland, and Libya and the neighboring colonies belonging to France and Great Britain."

While this article did not, in so many words, refer to Ethiopia, it can hardly be construed to mean anything else, for the only "unsettled frontiers" of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland were between these colonies and Abyssinia. The story of Italy's disappointment in the final settlement at Paris, of her colonial hunger unappeased by two strips of desert, is too well known to need repeating here. Mussolini's attitude toward his country's treatment is well shown by an excerpt from his letter in reply to Sir R. Graham:

"...the above mentioned proposals presented in London in November 1919 formed part of a wider negotiation of a colonial character arising out of the treaty of London, a negotiation which had only partial results."

The Italian Duce accepted the British proposals for joint representations to Ethiopia, and thus, once again, it would seem, Great Britain and Italy were in virtual alliance against the mountain empire, as they had been in the 1860's. The third party, France, was informed of the exchange of notes and seems to have raised no objections. In accordance with an established precedent of the old diplomatic order, Ethiopia was not consulted!

Almost half a year after the Anglo-Italian agreement, the British and Italian representatives at Addis Ababa presented identical notes to the Ethiopian Government. This action was a blunder so far as gaining any favor from the proud and suspicious Regent was concerned. He took both

17 Cmd. 2690 (1926), 10.
19 See Cmd. 2792 (1927)
governments to task for reaching an agreement about his country without consulting him. In his reply to Mr. Bentinck, the British representative, he said:

"The fact that you have come to an agreement, and the fact that you have thought it necessary to give us a joint notification of that agreement, make it clear that your intention is to exert pressure, and this, in our view, at once raises a previous question.

"The British Government had already entered into negotiations with the Abyssinian Government in regard to its proposal the Lake Isana barrage, and we had imagined that whether the proposal had been carried into effect or not, the negotiations would have been concluded with us; we should never have suspected that the British Government would have come to an agreement with another Government regarding our Lake."20

What a pathetic truth is expressed in this simple, straightforward statement of the case! Having made his protest to the two offending Powers, Ras Tafari went to the organization on which, to the very end of his ruling days, he futilely depended. He laid the case before the Secretariat of the League of Nations, a step which at least had the virtue of giving the affair instant and full publicity.

In 1937 many people in Great Britain, as well as in other countries, still believed that the new and open diplomacy of the League had forever replaced the old, secret bilateral treaties; consequently the revelation of the Conservative Government's apostasy caused considerable alarm. The main debate in Parliament, which had been preceded by a few minor skirmishes, took place on August 2.21 Captain Wedgwood Benn began the attack on the Conservatives by comparing the present situation of Ethiopia to that of Morocco in 1905. He felt that the recent agreement would lead to joint demands and the ultimate loss of Ethiopia independence. Captain Benn held

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20 Ibid., 5.
21 For the entire debate, see Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 193, 2721-51.
that the territorial integrity of Abyssinia was guaranteed by the Covenant of the League, the treaty of 1906 notwithstanding. He stated that Great Britain and Italy had both raised opposition to Ethiopia's being admitted to the League in the first place.\footnote{Ibid., 2731-33.} Sir Lurdoch MacDonald, the expert on the Nile Basin, while admitting the desirability of the Lake Tsana barrage, doubted if the reward would justify the political disturbance it would probably create. There were other equally valuable projects, he believed, which could be carried out without being the occasion of so much political turmoil. One of these alternative projects comprehended the building of a dam at Lake Albert and the drainage of the great sudd (swamp region) on the upper White Nile, which would make 80,000,000 acres available for cotton culture.\footnote{Ibid., 2732-35.}

In his reply Sir Austen Chamberlain first disposed of Sir Lurdoch MacDonald's Lake Albert proposal by reminding Sir Lurdoch that by his own admission the work would take thirty-five years. He then proceeded to explain the Anglo-Italian notes in terms which were calculated to allay the suspicions of Ethiopia and soothe the aroused feelings of the new diplomatic order:

"Let me repeat that these things constitute a Bilateral Agreement between Italy and ourselves. They do not pretend to bind, and they cannot possibly bind, any other Government. They suggest and imply no attack on the independence of Abyssinia and no limitation on the right of the Abyssinian Government to decide freely whether or not to grant us the concession we ask. What they do is to secure us against Italian opposition to a grant by Abyssinia of a concession for the construction of the Lake Tsana works by the Government of the Sudan, and to protect Italy against opposition through us for a concession for the construction of a railway."

As far as British opposition to Ethiopia's entering the League was concerned, he believed that one member of the Conservative Government in 1923 had offered some objection, but that was now past history.\footnote{Ibid., 2735-44.}
Following the Foreign Secretary, Mr. A. Smith warned the House of Italy's growing imperialistic designs. In fact, no speaker for the Opposition had anything to say against the building of the barrage in Lake Tsana. It was the method of the Government to which they objected. Lieutenant-Commander Kenworthy admitted the cotton shortage in Lancashire and recognized that it must be met with fresh supplies from the Sudan. He summed up the attack of the Opposition by branding the Government's policy ridiculous and pressing the hope that it would be reversed.

Ras Tafari was apparently satisfied by the publicity he had given the incident and the soothing replies of Britain and Italy (although he was by no means deceived by the letter), and the matter was dropped. It seems to us that Sir Austen Chamberlain's defense was very weak. The things the agreement was meant to accomplish had already been settled by the Tripartite Agreement, which both Great Britain and Italy still recognized. The conclusion of the Regent, that both countries intended to "exert pressure", was not immediately exerted, is probably explained by the adverse wave of public opinion, especially in Britain. It would be well to recall this earlier British expression when we come to consider the somewhat puzzling events of 1935.

Meanwhile the British did not relax their efforts at Tafari's court to obtain the coveted concession on Lake Tsana. At the end of the decade a temporary "scare" was caused in uninformed circles by the announcement in the press that the Abyssinian Government was negotiating for the construction of the barrage with the White Engineering Corporation of New York City. In answer to a question in the House of Commons Mr. A. Henderson said on June 19, 1930:

25 Ibid., 2746-47.
26 Ibid., 2748-51.
"As long ago as 1924, the Abyssinian Government made it clear that it was their intention to construct this dam themselves. To this decision His Majesty's Government could not object, and, as their chief concern was to get the dam constructed, they could only defer to the wishes of the Abyssinian Government when the latter selected for the task an American firm of such undoubted competence as the White Corporation." 27

The real truth of the matter seems to be that the British Government knew of the negotiations with the White Corporation all along, indeed was a party to them. An arrangement for a preliminary survey by engineers of this firm was made in 1931, although it was recognized that the economic depression would probably postpone the actual building of the dam. 23 In February 1934 a conference was held in Addis Ababa to discuss the project in the light of the report made by the preliminary survey. It was attended by representatives of the Sudan Government, of the Egyptian Government, and of the White Engineering Corporation. It was decided to have a further study made of the matter, beginning in October. 29 This, then, was the state of British-Ethiopian relations at the end of 1934 on the eve of the momentous events which were to make considerable change in the picture. Just how far His Majesty, Haile Selassie, had gone toward granting the British concession at that time, we do not know; the best guess would be that he had given in little, if any. Great Britain also had reason to be irritated with the Ethiopian Empire on account of slave raids across its borders into Sudan and Kenya, which became increasingly troublesome during the 1920's. 25

Our previous explanation of the central government's authority in the outlying provinces will show that Haile Selassie could not be held responsible for these outrages; still, it must be admitted that the British imperialists would not be averse to having for a neighbor a strong government which

27 Ibid., vol. 240, 379.
23 Cmd. 3936 (1931), 69.
29 Cmd. 4666 (1934).
could control the unruly tribes and at the same time be friendly toward
the economic concessions which they had so long sought in vain at the
Court of the Emperor. Such a government Signor Mussolini proposed to
establish in the mountain fastnesses of Ethiopia.

In 1928 it appeared for a brief instant that Britain's ally was
making faster progress than she was herself, for in that year was signed
between Italy and Ethiopia a twenty-year pact of friendship, non-aggres-
sion, conciliation, and arbitration. By this treaty both Governments
undertook to promote trade between their respective countries. A motor
road was to be built from Asab to Dessie, on which an Italo-Ethiopian
transport company was to have a monopoly of the commercial carrying trade.
Upon the completion of this highway Ethiopia was to be assigned a free
zone in the port of Asab. The Italians were doomed to disappointment.
They soon completed the road to the Eritrean frontier, but the Ethiopians
made no move to complete it to Dessie. The Emperor was too shrewd to
build a highway over which foreign troops could march into his domain.
Not without good historical reasons did he suspect the integrity of the
Italians.

The relations between Ethiopia and Italy became steadily worse in-
stead of better. When a clash between armed forces took place at Jalwal
early in December, 1934, it seemed, at first, to be only another border
incident, but it soon became evident that the Italian dictator meant it
to be the excuse for the complete conquest of the long coveted highland
empire. It is not the purpose of this study to trace the conquest itself,
or to review the complicated diplomatic proceedings that took place in
London, Paris, Rome, and Geneva. Italy did not seem disposed to make

30 MacCallum, op. cit., 33-46.
31 For a complete picture, the reader is referred to Toynebse's
Survey for 1933, vol. II.
a peaceable adjustment in regard to the Walwal dispute, and in January, 1935, Ethiopia asked to have the matter put on the agenda of the council of the League of Nations. Before it actually came up for discussion, however, both disputants had been persuaded to enter into direct negotiations for a settlement. Meanwhile, Mussolini began moving troops, ammunition and supplies in large quantities to Eritrea and Italian Somaliland and while he spoke of "putting the colonies in a state of defense", most persons believed he was preparing for an attack on Haile Selassie. Certainly, the press realized this early in the year, and as one goes back over its recordings and predictions from month to month, he is struck by the accuracy with which what really did happen was foretold. In view of this fact, the hopeful utterances for peace by statesmen of various countries, who should have been in a position to know, sound rather unconvincing and insincere. The whole Italo-Ethiopian War was given much more importance in the world's news than its size merited, because it was realized from the start that the whole system of collective security, the entire new diplomacy, as comprehended under the League Covenant, were at stake. The African conflict was also highly complicated by more momentous upheavals on the continent of Europe, of which Hitler's scrapping of the Versailles Treaty and the Locarno Agreement was the most important. The accompanying diplomatic crises made it impossible for the Italo-Ethiopian war to be dealt with on its own merits.

Nowhere was the conflict between the new diplomacy and the old shown more clearly than in Great Britain. If one remembers this clash, this dualism, he has the key to much of the so-called British official hypocrisy towards the matter. The Nationalist Government was in power in 1935. It was controlled almost altogether by the Conservatives, most of whom, in their heart of hearts, did not place any real confidence in the League of
Nations. They could not entirely disregard, however, the very real bulk of public opinion which was favorable to the League and to preserving the system of collective security at all costs. This feeling was made articulate by the famous "Peace Ballot" of 1934-35, one of the most remarkable expressions of public opinion ever obtained by a voluntary, non-political poll. Discounting the project as much as it is possible to do, one cannot disregard the conclusiveness of its results.

"The British National Peace Ballot was a private enterprise which was set on foot in March, 1934 by the League of Nations Union and was eventually carried out by a National Declarations Committee representing not only the Union itself but also thirty-eight other private organizations for public ends which had accepted an invitation to cooperate with the Union for this purpose." 31

The questionnaire contained the following five items:

1. Should Great Britain remain a member of the League of Nations?

2. Are you in favor of an all-around reduction in armaments by international agreement?

3. Are you in favor of an all-around abolition of national military and naval aircraft by international agreement?

4. Should the manufacture and sale of armaments for private profit be prohibited by an international agreement?

5. Do you consider that, if a nation insists on attacking another, the other nations should combine to compel it to stop by,

   (a) Economic and non-military measures?
   (b) If necessary, military measures?" 32

It is of vital importance to note the attitude of the political parties toward the Peace Ballot undertaking. The Labor and the Liberal Parties each endorsed it. The executive committee of the Conservative Party refused to endorse it. Sir John Simon attacked it on November 3, 1934 in the House of Commons during a debate in which he spoke against the restriction of the private manufacture and sale of arms. 33 And most significant of all, Mr. Stanley Baldwin

31 Toynbee, op. cit., 43.
32 Ibid.
33 Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, vol. 293, 1315-16.
said:

"It is curious that there is growing among the Labour Party support for what is called a collective peace system. A collective peace system, in my view, is perfectly impracticable in view of the fact to-day that the United States is not yet, to our unbounded regret, a member of the League of Nations and that in the last two or three years two Great Powers, Germany and Japan, have both retired from it. It is hardly worth considering when those be the facts. A collective peace system would never be undertaken without those countries. Of that I am certain, and so long as I have any responsibility in a Government for deciding whether or not this country shall join a collective peace system, I will say this: never as an individual will I sanction the British Navy being used for an armed blockade of any country in the world until I know what the United States of America is going to do." 34

Mr. Baldwin, however, had not estimated the enthusiasm of the popular response to the Peace Ballot. When the final results were announced on June 27, 1935, it was shown that a total of 11,589,185 votes had been cast, or 37.9% of the total number of voters in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The results on items 1 to 5a were overwhelmingly in the affirmative.

Even on the more serious 5b they were more than 2/3 to 1 in the affirmative. 35 They were significant enough to make the Conservatives take notice.

It was not long before Mr. Baldwin assured the National Declaration Committee that the foreign policy of the Government was founded upon the League of Nations. He was glad, he said, to have such wholehearted support during the critical negotiations which were going on at Geneva. 36 A careful examination of the records, however, fails to show any real conservative enthusiasm for collective security at any time during the Italo-Ethiopian crisis, either before or after this utterance of their leader. The speeches supporting it sound hollow in the face of actions which speak more loudly than words. The Conservatives had to pay verbal homage

34 This speech was made at Glasgow on November 23, 1934. See Toynbee, op. cit., 50.
35 Ibid., 51.
36 Ibid., 52-53.
to the League in the face of so much favorable public and ecclesiastical opinion, but when has the Foreign Office of any Government ever paid much attention to what the voters think? The Foreign Office is in a sphere apart.

We cannot go into any detailed study of the League's action on the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, except where it is so closely connected with British action as to make the two inseparable. Suffice it to say that the League, which cannot be considered apart from the Foreign Offices of its principle members, pursued a dilatory, face-saving, ineffective course, which makes tiresome and disgusting reading, even for the thoroughly disillusioned. Alarmed by the failure of direct negotiations with Italy and Mussolini's extensive preparations for invasion of his Empire, while Selassie again appealed to the Council in May. The result was a postponement of the question until August 25 while the two disputants should attempt to arbitrate in accordance with the Treaty of 1935. This gave Mussolini just the breathing space he wanted to make final preparations for a military conquest of Abyssinia. The Fascist leader never left the world in any real doubt as to his purpose. Unjustified as he was in the whole attempt, still his unabashed frankness is in refreshing contrast to the piously hypocritical verbiage of the leaders of the British democracy.

Meanwhile the controversy was beginning to gain recognition in the House of Commons. The first long debate on the subject took place June 7, 1935.33 Mr. Attlee, the leader of the Opposition, pleaded for support of the League Covenant.34 Mr. Vyvyan said:

"...I believe that the people of this country, whether

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37 For a striking summary of the attitude of the churches and clergy see ibid., 36-61.
39 Ibid., 2193-95.
in this narrow dispute or in the possibilities of European relationships, are ready for the widest possible measure of collective security and international action. The 11,000,000 votes in the peace ballot, which has been so ignorantly and maliciously criticized in some quarters, certainly prove that." 40

Answering for the Government, Mr. Anthony Eden said that the Government from the start had tendered its good offices to both parties. Especially significant were the words:

"In taking this action we were not influenced by any purely selfish motives... nor have we been animated by any desire to oppose Italian influence in Ethiopia. Our rights in that country are already fully protected by treaties... there is no reason whatever why British and Italian interests should not be mutually and harmoniously developed side by side. For neither do they nor need they conflict." 42

It seems that the italicized portion of this statement is the key to British policy. The British Foreign Office was never opposed to Italian interests in Ethiopia. British and Italian interests did not conflict. British interests were fully safeguarded by previous treaties. It would even be a fairly safe assertion that in many respects the British were more assured of realizing the final consummation of their plans in regard to Lake Tana under Italian than under Ethiopian auspices. We do not mean to say that even the Conservatives did not feel concern over Mussolini's successful defence of the League of Nations. But the Conservatives have ever been realists. After all, what more did the League mean to Great Britain at that time as a practical means of defense than the friendship and support of France? And France could not then risk a war with Italy to save the League, for what more did the League mean to her own security than the friendship and support of Great Britain, which she already had? The rearrangement of Germany had made a French renoncement with Italy a

40 Ibid., 2206.
41 Italics are mine.
necessity; this was realized early in 1935, and there is not much doubt that L. Laval gave Mussolini a free hand in Abyssinia. In fact, it was admitted in the British Parliament that France had disinterested herself economically in Abyssinia except for certain undertakings and except for a specified zone covering the railroad. In communicating this agreement to the British Foreign Office, Italy had intimated that she would be glad to exchange views concerning the mutual and harmonious development of British and Italian interests in Abyssinia. A special committee was set up to review this very thing, and while no report was ever made public, word leaked out that the British had agreed they had no substantial interests except in regard to Lake Tsana and the headwaters of the Blue Nile.

In going through the questions and answers put to the British Foreign Secretary in the House of Commons from the beginning of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict to the present, one finds always the same assurance—that the British interests around Lake Tsana are fully protected against any eventuality and that the Italians have no intention of violating their treaty obligations. On June 1, 1935 a report from Cairo asserted that an agreement had "virtually been reached" between the Egyptian, Sudanese, and Ethiopian Governments by which the White Engineering Corporation would shortly commence construction. The Egyptian Government was to bear 90% of the cost, and the Sudanese Government, the remaining 10%. The Sudan was at first to get only 10% of the water, but might take as high as 25% after a lapse of 25 years by assuming a corresponding share of the costs. An all-weather motor road was to be built from Addis Ababa to the Lake.

43 See Tymbee, op. cit., 31-32.
45 Ibid.
Whether agreement was actually reached or not, the terms of the alleged plan are in perfect accord with what a student of British policy in regard to the upper Nile after 1902 would have predicted. Egypt, not the Sudan, was the country in immediate need of more water. But the Sudan would need more in the future, and note the careful provision for meeting this need. True, on June 26 Sir Samuel Hoare denied that any such agreement had been made. 47 Anthony Eden's statement, at a little later date, however, is more significant. He admitted that the reported conference had been held, but stated:

"These interests have, however, been recognized in the past both by the Abyssinian Government and by the Governments of France and Italy. His Majesty's Government are therefore content to wait for a more suitable moment before pressing forward with the scheme." 48

Need any more be said? The more favorable time, although Mr. Eden intimated it would be when a satisfactory settlement of the quarrel between Italy and Ethiopia had been reached, no doubt really meant when the sovereignty of Haile Selassie should be a thing of the past. As late as April 3, 1936, when complete Italian victory was assured, the Italian ambassador gave assurance at the British Foreign Office that all obligations in regard to Lake Tsana would be fulfilled. 49

In the face of these assurances, it is perfectly obvious why the Conservative British Government could court public approval by giving lip service to the League Covenant. They did nothing at all of a really effective nature to stop the Fascist Conquest.

On July 11 occurred another long debate on foreign policy in the House of Commons. 50 This debate was introduced by a long speech on foreign policy in general by Sir Samuel Hoare, the new Secretary of State for Foreign

48 Ibid., 304, 156-57.
49 Ibid., vol. 317, 847.
50 Ibid., vol. 304, 509-634.
Affairs. He defended the Government's policy to date, asking if differences between Italy and Abyssinia were great enough to justify a war between Italy and Great Britain. Besides, Great Britain was not unsympathetic toward Italian aspirations. 51

In answering Sir Samuel Hoare's speech Mr. Atlee called it the first realist speech on foreign policy the House had heard in years. He arraigned the Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde attitude of the Conservatives:

"Jekyll represents the idealist view of foreign affairs based on the League of Nations, and the kind of principles which we have been endeavoring to establish in the world since the war. Hyde represents Imperialist realism and that is what we have had from the Foreign Secretary this afternoon." 52

Mr. Attlee further said:

"I want the Government to face the fact that masses of people in this country to-day believe in the League system though they do not believe in a League system which is only Imperialism in disguise." 53

The Opposition leader in all his later speeches usually referred with biting criticism to the "dual policy" of the Conservative ministry.

Events moved rapidly towards a climax after the summer adjournment of Parliament August 2, 1935. Italy continued her preparations to attack in spite of the arbitration of the Walwal dispute; it was known that Mussolini was only waiting until the end of the summer rains. The League Council met to consider the dispute in September, with the French and British Foreign Offices meanwhile frantically trying to find a compromise which would satisfy both parties and still save the face of the League. These attempts were an utter failure. No diplomats in the world could have succeeded. In the face of this failure Hoare and Laval agreed on the eve of the historic eleventh of September that in the event of an Italo-Ethiopian war they would not apply any measure of naval blockade, or any

51 Ibid., 519.
52 Ibid., 534.
53 Ibid., 537-38.
military sanctions. This secret understanding, had it been known at the time, would have made Sir Samuel Hoare's constituents and the world at large less enthusiastic about his speech before the Council the next day; there he put the British Government directly behind the League Covenant.

When the House of Commons again met on October 22, the worst fears of the anti-imperialists had been realized. The Fascist armies had already crossed the Eritrean and Somaliland borders. The League Council had unanimously declared Italy the aggressor and breaker of the Covenant. A Co-ordinating Committee had been set up to plan economic sanctions and had made its report. We need not list these sanctions. Suffice it to say that they would have been rather inadequate, even if applied earlier, and almost useless at this advanced stage of the conflict.

The two day session of the House was taken up almost entirely by a debate on the Italo-Ethiopian War and the British Government's policy in regard thereto. Sir Samuel Hoare defended the double policy of carrying out the covenant and at the same time exploring every permissible line of settlement and conciliation. He condemned the slowness of the League, saying:

"Military sanctions, like economic sanctions, can only be applied collectively, and so far as we are concerned we have made it clear from the beginning of the controversy that though we are prepared to take our full share as a loyal member of the League, we are only prepared to take our share in collective action." 56

Of course, the Opposition attacked Sir Samuel from all angles. The view of the official Opposition, however, was again best summed up by Mr. Attlee in a bitter speech, from which some quotations are of value:

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54 This agreement leaked out through M. Laval in December. See Toynbee, op. cit., 183-85.
56 Ibid., 29.
"...to my mind you cannot follow at one and the same time the system of the League of Nations and the system of the old-fashioned Imperialism." 57

And later, speaking on sanctions:

"The question of economic sanctions was rendered very difficult by the fact that time was allowed to elapse—that so many horses got out of the stable before they even attempted to repair the lock; and the door of the stable is still open. Signor Mussolini was allowed to carry on. He was allowed to get all the stores he wanted, to send his troops to Africa, and then at last the matter came before the League." 58

The attitude of the Government had been to buy off the aggressor. Mussolini had never thought the world was in earnest. 59

The second day after it had convened the House of Commons was dissolved to face a General Election. One might almost call it another Khaki Election, for the issue was, "Defend Abyssinia". However, there was no real issue so far as that was concerned, for all three parties wanted to defend Abyssinia, the Labor and the Liberal in reality, and the Conservative also if one listened to their election pledges instead of studying critically their actual record for the preceding nine months. More than that, the election was to secure a mandate for pushing a policy of accelerated armament. To quote only one statement, Mr. Baldwin had said:

"There are risks of peace,... while I am prepared to pursue that policy with all my heart and soul, I will not pursue it, and I will not be responsible for the conduct of any Government in this country at the present time, if I am not given to remedy the deficiencies which have occurred in our defensive services since the war." 60

The Prime Minister wanted to be prepared in case the League failed. 61 He knew, it may be safely said, that the League had already failed, and from a realistic point of view it was high time for Britain to arm. Germany was doing so with all possible speed. Late events had made the Government wake up to the fact that Britain's vaunted naval supremacy in the Medi-
ransean had been seriously challenged by the crack Fascist air force.

The British voters rallied to the support of what the great masses of the uninformed believed to be the Conservative Government's support of the League Covenant. They returned it to office in November with an overwhelming majority.

Meanwhile the co-ordinating committee was considering a further sanction, the prohibition of the shipment of oil into Italy. Here, at last, was a sanction that Signor Mussolini did mind! He let his disapproval be known in no uncertain words. He would fight. Great Britain and France had to act at once to soothe Il Duce's temper. On December 14 Sir Samuel Hoare went to Paris. It is still too early for the historian to say with accuracy exactly what went on in the French capital; however, the affair need no longer be termed the "Hoare-Laval Mystery". In this case Paris seems the place to start rather than London. As has already been pointed out, France wanted to hold Italy's friendship at all costs. M. Laval succeeded in getting the meeting of the Sanctions' Committee at which time the oil embargo would undoubtedly have been recommended, postponed until December 12. In the meantime he held several important conferences with the Italian Ambassador, Signor Cerruti. Whether it was at Cerruti's instigation that Laval made his proposals to Hoare or not, does not matter. It seems certain that he, at least, knew of them. Neither is it reasonable to assume that the Frenchman "sprang a surprise" on his English visitor. Great Britain and France had admittedly continued to pursue their dual policy after the September meeting of the Council—supporting the League and at the same time seeking for any satisfactory peace settlement that could be arrived at through negotiations a deux or
It may be that M. Leval did intimate that if oil sanctions were imposed, Mussolini would attack the British Mediterranean fleet. It may be he also intimated that in such an eventuality there would be considerable delay before France could come to Britain’s support. Perhaps Sir Samuel Hoare, a sick man at the time, was overcome by the diplomatic big guns of the Frenchman—but that hardly seems likely. The plan which the two diplomats finally agreed upon as a basis for negotiations between Italy and Ethiopia was not inconsistent with British interest; it was certainly not inconsistent with the policy the British Foreign Office had really been pursuing all along. It is not necessary to give the details of the plan. It would have given Italy outright all the territory of which she was actually in military possession at the time. In addition it would have given her economic supremacy in “southern” Ethiopia over a large area, a supremacy that for all practical purposes meant the end of Ethiopian sovereignty there.

The terms of the agreement leaked out in the press as soon as they had been concluded, and Mr. Baldwin faced the disagreeable task of trying to make explanations to an indignant Opposition and a bewildered public. The storm broke in the House of Commons on December 10. Some of the speeches contain such biting criticisms of the League as it had been perverted to selfish imperialistic aims that they deserve quotation. Mr. Kingsley Griffith declared:

"I cannot imagine any more lamentable conclusion than that the League, which should have been the guardian of the peace of the world, should become the distributor of spoils after a victory which is yet in doubt."

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62 The best account of what probably went on is in Toynbee, op. cit., 277-95.
63 So says Toynbee, op. cit., 292-93.
64 The text is in Cmd. 5044, (1935).
Colonel Wedgwood spoke sarcastically of how the League kept peace:

"It has always been possible to secure peace through the League of Nations. You watch which way the war is going and then you have conference after conference and polite indignation, and in the end the conqueror gets what he has conquered. Peace is made." 66

Still more blunt was the criticism of Mr. Stephen:

"Long ago a great Russian leader called it a thieves' kitchen, a collection of bandits, and the present position in connection with Italo-Ethiopian dispute makes it plain that... it remains a thieves' kitchen or a league of robbers." 67

In defense of the Government's policy Anthony Eden replied that the Co-ordinating Committee had specifically approved of attempts to find a basis for discussion between the two parties. That was all the Hoare-Laval proposal was ever meant to be. 68

The Prime Minister said:

"We shall go on, as we have gone on, in conjunction with other members of the League, as far as these other members will go, as far as we can all go together. Unilateral action we do not propose to take any more than we have ever proposed to take it." 69

The Conservative Government was not prepared for the storm of indignation which swept the country. The press was full of hostile criticism of the betrayal of the League. Letters poured in to M. P.'s from aroused constituents. The Government was forced to cover up. It did cover up, not by making any real reversal of policy, but by repudiating the plan, which had already served its real purpose, and by throwing overboard temporarily the unfortunate Foreign Secretary.

On December 19 Sir Samuel Hoare defended himself in the House of Commons in a dignified and somewhat pathetic speech. 70 While it cannot

66 Ibid., 832.
67 Ibid., 836.
68 Ibid., 822-25.
69 Ibid., 858.
70 Ibid., 2007-17.
yet be taken as the last word on the matter, there are several important points in it. He stated that for some time he had been obsessed with the urgency of two grave issues; first, that of preventing a second European conflagration, and second, that of preventing an isolated war between Great Britain and Italy. About a fortnight ago there had come a crisis in both policies, perhaps as a result of the sanctions already imposed; then, too, the threatened oil embargo had seemed to cause a new situation. From all sides he had received reports that no responsible Government could ignore, that Italy would regard the oil sanction as a military sanction, as an act involving war against her. War with Italy was not feared by Great Britain, but it would have meant the dissolution of the League! He had not wanted to go to Paris, but he had been pressed on all sides; refusal was impossible.

"It was in an atmosphere of threatened war that the conversations began, and it was in an atmosphere in which the majority of the member States—indeed, I would say the totality of the member States—appeared to be opposed to military action. It was a moment of great urgency. Within a few days the question of the oil embargo was to come up at Genoa, and I did not feel myself justified in proposing any postponement of the embargo, unless it could be shown to the League that negotiation had actually started." 71

The differences with France were mentioned. The late Foreign Secretary said:

"It was certainly the minimum basis upon which the French Government were prepared to proceed, and this minimum was only reached after two days of strenuous discussion." 72

After this frank, dignified speech from his ousted colleague, the Prime Minister's explanations sounded rather weak. 73 His excuse that liaison with the Foreign Secretary had been temporarily broken was ridiculous. Neither can we accept the statement that the final proposals went much further than the Cabinet had thought they would. The press reports prognosticating the

71 Ibid., 2003.
72 Ibid., 2010.
73 Ibid., 2030-39.
terms of the agreement to be reached days before hoare went to Paris were too close to the actual terms settled upon to be explained away. So may accept Mr. Baldwin's confession that he had not been prepared for so much deep feeling on the subject. At any rate, he concluded, the proposals were now completely dead, and they would not be resurrected.

As we have said, no final judgment can yet be passed on the exact "why and wherefore" of the Hoare-Laval Peace Plan. We venture the assertion that it was not primarily to avoid a war between Great Britain and Italy. Mussolini probably would have steered clear of that at any cost. If, however, Mussolini was in earnest, certainly realistic historians of the future will not condemn Sir Samuel Hoare's actions. It seems more likely that the plan was calculated all along to do exactly what it did do—create a "dust storm" which would delay or prevent altogether the application of the oil sanction. League action had been thwarted in September by agreements behind the scenes; this was only a continuation of the same policy.

And we wish to emphasize finally, that, the Hoare-Laval Plan was in perfect accordance with what had been the policy of the British Foreign Office in regard to Abyssinia for at least fifty years.74

74 An interesting side light is given by Mr. Allan Nevins in "The Hoare-Laval Mystery" in Current History for February, 1936, 502-03. He thinks the final explanation will involve Mr. Baldwin and Sir Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Undersecretary of the Foreign Office, more than it will Sir Samuel Hoare. The latter was long Sir John Simon's faithful servant. Simon was never a real supporter of the League. Vansittart was with Hoare in Paris, and Hoare was a sick man. "Evidently a reacquiescence of the old Simon policy, of the imperialistic tendencies of the treaties of 1906 and 1923 regarding Ethiopia, suddenly appeared in London. Weakened by such forces in his rear, browbeaten by Laval, genuinely fearing a European war, Hoare gave way—and Baldwin did the rest." (p. 506).
There remains but little to be said. By May, 1936, Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia was practically complete. The emperor fled the country, and Italy annexed his empire. Great Britain has not as yet formally recognized this action, but the time-honored conventions of formal declaration of war, recognition of military conquest by a successful neighboring State, etc., do not seem to have any place under this enlightened dispensation of the "new diplomacy". We have all the old evils without the saving graces of the old formalities.

The Italian conquest of Ethiopia was the last blow to an already staggering League. The old diplomacy reigns triumphantly once more; perhaps it was never off the throne anyway. Economic imperialism is still far from a dead force.

It will be interesting to see that the future has to bring forth for the British along the upper reaches of the Blue Nile. We venture the prophecy that they will not be in the least disappointed, and that there will soon be a British controlled dam across the outlet of Lake Tsana to store more water for the fertile acres of Gezira.
Bibliography

Following is a list of the books, periodicals, and documents which were consulted in making the present study, together with a brief note on the value of each.

I Documents

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Savoir, Charles et Hopf, Jules, et al., Nouveau Recueil Général de Traites et Autres Actes Relatif aux Rapports de Droit International (continuation of Grand Recueil de C. Fr. De Hartens), Deuxième Série, 35 vols. 1976-1903. Only one document was taken from this collection for the present study.

II Periodicals

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Italo-Ethiopian War. The bibliography at the end is complete and very useful.