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THE CAMPAIGN OF ADOWA AND THE RISE OF MENELIK

**THE
CAMPAIGN OF ADOWA
AND
THE RISE OF MENELIK**

**BY
G. F.H. BERKELEY**

WITH MAPS

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1902**

TO MY MOTHER

P R E F A C E

The battle of Adowa, and the campaign that preceded it, are important from many points of view, though as yet they have received but little attention in the British Isles.

In the first place it may rank as a peculiar phenomenon,—for it amounts to nothing less,—that a European army of about twenty thousand men should be annihilated by a native African race. To the best of my belief there is no parallel case in modern history.

The casualties during that one day's fighting amounted to over 25,000 in killed and wounded alone; but it is not merely these high numbers that give it a claim to attention. The whole war should be considered as one completed episode in the history of our Italian allies and of African colonization—an episode with many sides. To those, for instance, who make a study of campaigns, it offers a singularly suitable subject, as it lies (so to speak) "in a nutshell." Instead of there being several armies in the field, several lines of communication and several widely distant theatres of war, each of which influences the action in the other, there are here only two hostile forces confronting one another at the end of their lines of communication like two dogs fighting at the end of their chains. The element of chance is eliminated, as far as it is possible to eliminate it in war. Each move brings its inevitable result, which is often foreseen by the leaders with complete accuracy. It becomes easy,

in fact, to enter into the feelings of the opposing generals.

For Britons it should have a special interest, as being the first important campaign in which a nation with a conscript army has had to face serious colonial difficulties; and one of the first wherein modern long-range weapons come into play on both sides.

Here also is a campaign in which, owing to the nature of the ground, the Italians decided to employ *no mounted troops whatsoever*,—a fact that proves how singularly their experience differs from our own during the last six years.

Finally, from the broader standpoint of politics and history, it seems possible that it heralds the rise of a new power in Africa—we are reminded that the natives of that continent may yet become a military factor worthy of our closest attention. The suggestion has even been made—absurd as it appears at present—that this is the first revolt of the Dark Continent against domineering Europe. And what a series of anomalies does Abyssinia represent! A nation chiefly of Semitic blood, of dark skin, and of feudal institutions. A nation that is young to-day, though it was powerful when the book of Genesis was written, and was Christian when our ancestors still worshipped Thor and Odin.

It is in these considerations and not in the actual story of the fighting—though the Italo-Abyssinian war abounds in dramatic incidents—that lies the true interest of the Campaign of Adowa.

There were no British or Americans with either the Italian or Shoan armies, so that in our language there can be no first-hand narrative of the events; any account of them must be drawn from the memoirs and conversation of

survivors. As regards the memoirs etc. consulted, I give a list of the best that I was able to discover during a search of some months in Italy. More especially must I acknowledge a debt to the work of Signor Vico Mantegazza, for his description of the war-preparation at Massowah, which it would have been impossible for anyone to describe merely from official returns without having seen it.

The spelling of Abyssinian names is a matter of difficulty. I have spelt, as far as possible, phonetically, according to English pronunciation, giving also in many places the Italian spelling for the benefit of those who prefer the more detailed Italian maps.

GEORGE F-H. BERKELEY.

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APPENDIX A

OPERATIONS AGAINST THE DERVISHES

Part I, Chapter IV

THE first, of the series of dangers that fell one after another upon the young Colony of Erythrea, came from the North West; it was now seven years since the fall of Khartum, and during that period] a gigantic empire had been formed by the Dervishes, reaching roughly as far south as the fourth degree northern latitude, and as far north as the second cataract of the Nile; westward it stretched away as far as Wadai, and eastwards to the Anglo-Egyptian territory of Suakim.

Countries and tribes the very names of which are scarcely known in Europe, had been subdued to the ruler at Omdurman, who bade his followers carry the true religion to the ends of the earth.

In 1885 after triumphing over Egypt, England, and every other nation that opposed him, while his movement was still at the height of its power, the Mahdi died. For a time, however, the successes continued; masses of warriors would move about from one border to another of their empire, and then, at a sudden inspiration of God, would dash over the frontier and reduce the neighbouring province to a desert. In central Africa they were the terror of the

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surrounding peoples; in Abyssinia, even, their approach was dreaded; and in our own army has not the soldiers' poet recorded of "Fuzzy Wuzzy," that he was "a pore benighted 'eathen but a first class fightin' man," and that he "cut our sentries up at Suakim." But, apart from poetry, there is more than one regiment in the service that remembers how the Dervishes stalked these sentries during the night and how sometimes the bodies were found gashed and mutilated in the morning; or how the young soldiers would be brought back to camp nervous and feverish after the long strain during the hours of darkness, when any moment might bring a bullet from a hidden enemy.

But such movements as Mahdiism are of course doomed to a quick rise and an equally rapid fall, because no portion of the world can live on enthusiasm, whether religious or political, for more than a few years. Mahdiism was entirely unproductive; war was necessary for its existence; it could destroy, but could not create.

It followed, therefore, in the natural order of things, that within five or six years of the death of their prophet, the triumphant Mahdist armies, which in case of need could place almost 100,000 warriors in line, should have sunk into the snarling Dervish hordes that lived largely on an organized system of raids, and received with a certain sprinkling of cynicism the religious exhortations of the Khalifa Abdullahi.

In some places the Dervish sank so low as to earn an honest living by doing business even with the unbeliever. In Kassala, for instance, the Emir Musaed Gaidum presided over a small but growing trade between that town and the

sea coast of Erythrea, which might in time have aroused the rivalry and the resentment of the British in Suakim; but these developments were too often interrupted by wars to attain to any great results.

In 1890 the first collision took place between the Dervish raiders and the Italians. In the northern portion of the Colony there is a large tract of land occupied by the tribes of the Beni-Amer,—a race of mixed origin, being in part Abyssinian and in part Arab. Coming from such stock one might naturally suppose them to inherit some of the hottest fighting blood in the world, but, on the contrary, they are said to be unwarlike¹ cultivators of the soil. Such a peaceful and prosperous race were certain to excite the cupidity and contempt of the Dervishes.

In June 1890 Major Cortese, the commander of the garrison at Keren heard that a thousand of the enemy, many of them armed with rifles taken from the Egyptians, were ravaging among the Beni Amer. He at once ordered Captain Fara, with two native companies, to march westwards as far as Bisha (about two days' march). A few days later he heard that the Dervishes were threatening Dega (the capital of Beni Amer—situated at about one-third of the way from Agordat to Asmara), so he himself started to attack them in rear. The enemy had thus penetrated into the Colony unmolested, but both officers were waiting to cut off his retreat. After successfully ravaging Dega, the invaders began their homeward march; though laden with booty they managed to evade Major Cortese, who only succeeded in

¹ Baratieri: *Memorie d'Africa*.

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catching up and hastening the movements of their rear-guard; but as they passed Agordat, Captain Fara suddenly attacked them with the bayonet, driving them off into headlong flight almost before they had time to organize any resistance; they lost all their booty, and prisoners, and left some 250 dead on the field.

In June 1892, another attempt at a raid was made in the same direction, but it was met at Serobeti and defeated by Captain Hidalgo, who with 300 natives brilliantly repulsed 900 Dervishes including 100 mounted men. This small engagement is chiefly remarkable as being the first success of an officer who afterwards made a name for himself. It was after this defeat that the trade from Kassala reached its highest pitch of prosperity; it seemed, indeed, as if the Dervishes meant to give up their inroads on the Italian territory.

Throughout the year 1893 the whole country was in a condition of profound peace; there was little movement in the Dervish world. In the territory of Gallabat between Lake Tsana and the Blue Nile, some 10,000 men were being drilled and subjected to the severe discipline by which the Khalifa prepared his followers for battle; a few small raids had been directed towards Suakim by order of Osman Digna; some ravaging had been done near the wells on the road to Korosco, and Mahmud Ahmed was occupied in suffocating a new religion in Kordofan; but no danger was apprehended in the Colony; the Governor had been called away to Rome, and Colonel Arimondi was in command.¹

¹ Melli.

The system of defence had been carefully thought out by the Italians; spies selected as far as possible from the tribes that had a blood-feud with the Dervishes, were living in Kassala, the "advanced sentinel" of the Khalifa, and in the smaller towns Carcabat, Bitame and Elit, which are slightly to the East of it: an officer of whose ability the Governor had a high opinion was in command of the intelligence department.¹ In addition to these precautions, most of the chiefs around Agordat had been won over to the Italian interest, for they naturally disliked the Dervish raids. The fort of Agordat itself though not completed, was sufficiently strong to cope with uncivilized weapons; its position was a good one, commanding the point where the roads meet from Keren and Asmara; troops from Keren could reach Agordat in about a day and a half, from Asmara in about two and a half or three.

In November (1893) General Arimondi was informed that 3,000 men had been recalled from Gallabat to Khartum, but such movements were too common to excite any alarm; soon afterwards, however, he heard that the whole army from Gallabat had been moved to Ghedaref—viz., half way to Kassala, which was always the base of operations against the Colony. At the same time war preparations were being pushed forward at Omdurman; on December 14th (1893) their forward movement began.

The Italian troops were rapidly collected at Agordat; they amounted in all to 42 officers and 33 men, Italians; of the

¹ This account is taken from General Baratieri himself; but the opinion of Signor Mantegazza, who deals at some length with the subject, is that the intelligence department was a failure.

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natives there were 2,106; Arimondi had also 8 guns and 212 cavalry horses—a total of 2,402 men including irregulars. The Dervishes were about 10,000 strong. Arimondi was therefore greatly outnumbered, but he had with him several officers who afterwards became celebrated in the colonial wars of Italy; in the following account which (except the narrative of Mohammed Idris, the Ascaro) is based solely on the general's official report, only the names of those who reappear will be mentioned.

It will be seen that the Fort of Agordat lies in an obtuse angle formed between the great river Barca, flowing from East to West, and its tributary the Damtai, flowing into it from the South East. Arimondi had aligned his army on the left of the Damtai facing northwards, with its left flank resting on Agordat; he intended to defend the Barca. But he had also made preparations for taking up a fresh position facing to either flank,—whether to East or West,—in case of the Dervishes declining to make a frontal attack and endeavouring to cut his lines of communication.

This was exactly the plan they had formed; crossing the Barca lower down (where it bends northwards) they appeared on the opposite bank to that on which Arimondi stood, but instead of making a frontal attack on him they passed by, leaving him on their right, crossed the Barca again, (taking no notice of a few shots from the guns of the fort), and occupied the small villages of Sabderat¹ and Algheden, due east of his position,—thereby turning his right flank and threatening his communications with Keren. Arimondi had

¹ This village of Sabderat must not be confused with the larger Sabderat which is just outside Kassala.

obtained full knowledge of their movements by means of the Asmara squadron of cavalry which he had sent out to keep in touch with them; he understood therefore at once the object of their march, and promptly changed front to his right, in the hope that they might attack him. His small force was disposed as follows. On its right was Colonel Cortese (already mentioned) in command of a composite battalion of infantry (two companies of the 2nd and two of the 4th Natives with the afterwards celebrated Captain Galliano) and the 1st Battery; in the centre was one company and one battery within the fort, on the left (next the Barca) was another company. Slightly in rear of his left flank was the reserve, consisting of two companies, two squadrons and some irregulars.

Perceiving that his enemies had no intention of attacking him, Arimondi decided, in spite of his small numbers, to take the offensive, being afraid that they would either cut him off from Keren, or attack him during the night when the superior accuracy of his manœuvring and fire would no longer be of any avail: it must of course be remembered that to a force like that of the Dervishes their own communications were of little importance.

At 11.30 a.m. on December 21st, 1893, the battle of Agordat began; the Italian batteries opened fire on the two villages, but without any great result; at 12.15 Arimondi ordered Cortese (on the right) to advance with his battalion and battery¹ and then, as soon as the

¹ Captain Giraud's company was ordered to occupy the ground on which Cortese's men had been posted,—after the first attack it reinforced the firing line.

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movement was begun, directed the two companies forming the centre and left to make a simultaneous forward movement. Cortese's four companies in *échelon* quickly crossed the Dantai river, and ascended on to the high ground on the opposite bank; one company had even crossed the Inchierai stream when it suddenly came in sight of the Dervishes, between 800 and 900 yards distant. It at once opened fire, as did the battery some 300 yards in rear; at the same moment the companies forming the centre (Major Fadda) and the left (Captain Oddone), having advanced amongst the palm trees beside the river, also came in contact with the enemy. The Dervishes at first returned the fire without moving, but soon they brought their banners to the front and began to advance against the Italian right, endeavouring to outflank it, especially by means of their cavalry; they had no reserves, but simply advanced in the half-moon formation of savage races,—the first line being composed of men who carried rifles, and the second of rifles and lances intermingled. The fighting shortly became serious; it is described in the following terms by one of the Ascari in Galliano's battalion,—who, we may remark, was a Mohammedan and regarded the Dervishes as brothers, though he was ready to fight against them like a loyal Buluk-bashi: "I had," he says, "only to choose between doing injury to the Dervishes and, if necessary, slaughtering some of them, or being myself injured or, indeed, slaughtered by them: of the two alternatives I far preferred the former. Besides, they were guilty of such rapine and so many cruelties that it could not be displeasing to Allah that his faithful servant Mohammed Idris should fight against them and

punish them." Animated by these pious sentiments, Mohammed Idris fought like a hero. He continues :

"From the moment when Lieutenant-Colonel Cortese ordered us to advance we may say that the battle began; but from that moment I can no longer tell you exactly what happened. I know that my company, with Captain Verdelli in front, was checked in its course by a furious counter-attack of the Dervishes, and thrown back, together with the others on to the 1st Battery. I know that Captain Forno's Company made a desperate defence of the battery itself, which was trying to get its guns strapped on to the mules and retire, but without success, because the poor brutes one by one fell dead or wounded, and the artillery remained in the hands of the Dervishes. I know that in this furious *melée* there fell Captain Forno, Lieutenants Pennazzi and Colmia-Piassotto, Furiere¹ Prófili of the battery, and a hundred Ascari. And, finally, I know that as for myself I got a good sword cut on the left shoulder. Still I admit that while we were retiring I was glad to have found out how well my fellow-countrymen fought,—far more bravely than the Abyssinians; but when I saw Captain Giraud's company, which had been posted elsewhere and was now coming to help us, and the cavalry dismounting and advancing into the firing line, I was still more glad, because I was an Italian Buluk-bashi and wanted the Italians to win."

This is a very good description of what happened. Cortese was compelled to retire (at 12.50) leaving his guns in the

¹ The highest rank of N.C.O.: there is no exactly corresponding rank in the British army.

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hands of the enemy, but he succeeded in restoring order amongst his men, and retreated slowly. Owing to this repulse of the right, the centre and left were obliged to follow suit, although their attack had been more or less successful. But the Dervish losses had been very heavy, especially amongst the chiefs; the Buluk-bashi, who knew his compatriots, tells us that "amongst their dead they counted Ahmed-Ali and two other Emirs of great repute; and, in short, the Mahdiist hordes, remaining without their chief, lost heart, and their attack became less furious.

Observing this unsteadiness on the part of the enemy, Arimondi decided (at one o'clock) to reinforce his right wing by sending forward Lieutenant Giraud and two dismounted squadrons, (as detailed by the Buluk-Bashi). The attack was then renewed and, after one failure, the Italian troops succeeded in again crossing the Dantai and recapturing their guns. The centre and left were also reinforced, and the whole line began to gain ground. Soon the companies on the Italian right were able to press back the enemy opposite them, so far as almost to hem in the whole Dervish army between themselves and the river Barca. Then the flight began: by 2.20 p.m. the victory was complete. The Dervishes left 1,000 dead, 72 banners, a machine gun and over 700 rifles on the field; their total losses amounted to about 2,000. Some attempts at pursuit were made, but without success.

The Italian losses in the battle of Agordat were 4 white men killed and 3 wounded, 104 natives killed and 121 wounded, total 232. The news of the victory was received, as was natural, with the greatest rejoicing in Italy. Colonel Arimondi was promoted to the rank of general and most

of the other officers were decorated,—with almost too lavish a hand one is inclined to think. Arimondi, however, deserves all praise for his mode of conducting these operations: in the first place for the rapidity of his concentration at Agordat; then for his decision to attack although he knew that by waiting ten or twelve hours his numbers would be increased,—Captain Persico's company being on the way; and, finally, for his altered tactics, to suit the broken ground. It was here that he first employed the formation known to the Italian writers as that of the "thin lines."¹

It undoubtedly was a brilliant success on the part of the Italian officers, and produced a definite narrowing in the political horizon of the Khalifa. That potentate was beginning to discover that the conquests of war are barren unless supplemented by those of peace; it is said that he had launched these 10,000 men eastward, in the hopes of establishing under his authority a definite trade route to one of the ports of the Red Sea, and such a scheme might undoubtedly have prolonged the life of his Empire, as a similar opening has prolonged that of Abyssinia; but after the battle of Agordat there is no further question of his reaching the sea.

On the day that the news of the victory reached Rome General Baratieri hastened to return to the Colony; he felt that his absence during a time of war might create an unfavourable impression, although it had occurred through no fault of his own. He had arrived in Italy to find the Giolitti ministry about to resign, and had tendered his own resig-

¹ *Vide* Chapter III, Baratieri's Reforms. Also Luzeux, p. 33, *Etudes critiques sur la guerre entre l'Italie et l'Abyssinie*. Mantegazza, p. 191, *La Guerra in Africa*.

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nation; but the new ministry of Signor Crispi refused to accept it, so that he could now return to the colony with full confidence of their support.

No sooner had he landed in Africa than he began to think of turning Arimondi's victory to some account, and preventing the Dervishes from attempting a fresh invasion. The enterprise that to him seemed most advantageous was a raid on Kassala, as the capture of that stronghold,—in its very existence a menace to the Colony,—would paralyze their attacks, which he felt might become dangerous “if they coincided, for instance, in December (1894) or in January (1895), with a raising of shields in Ethiopia.”¹ These words of his prove that he quite understood the uncertainty of affairs in Abyssinia, and wished to strike his enemies singly, in which aim he was undoubtedly right.

There were still six months to wait before the moment for the expedition could arrive, as he did not intend to move until the end of June (1894), or the beginning of July, so that the River Atbara being flooded should cut off the Dervishes from the heart of their empire, and thereby prevent their receiving any assistance from either Ghedaref or Khartum. His preparations, however, began at once and with great secrecy; until July 11th, he says, “the operation was a mystery to everyone,” and on the following day he received a telegram from the Government, who had till then demurred at his scheme, giving him “carte blanche” to act as he thought fit.

¹ Baratieri's letter of June 8th, 1894. He says elsewhere that it was the news of Mangasha's reconciliation with Menelik that finally decided him to dispose of the Dervishes at once.

The operations that led to the fall of Kassala are a remarkable instance of rapid and able management. The whole expedition presents to a great extent the appearance of a leap in the dark, for the country was of course unknown to the Italians, and its inhabitants were probably hostile. The corps of operations consisted of 56 white officers, 41 white men, 16 jus-bashi (native lieutenants) 2,510 Ascari, 146 horses, 250 mules and 183 camels; the line of march, starting from Agordat, was by Dinguaz, Anasciait, Uacait, Sabderat,—a slightly northern detour about 125 miles long, but well supplied with water; in only four days this distance was accomplished without the slightest mishap and the whole corps halted at Sabderat.

At 1 a.m. on the following night (of the 16th to 17th), it moved off, headed by Hidalgo's battalion, and advanced steadily through the mist until, at 6 a.m., the presence of some Baggara cavalry was signalled; the battalions were therefore formed into two squares, and then the advance continued. At 7 a.m. the advanced guard opened fire at the enemy's cavalry who had chanced upon it,—for the force was now very near to Kassala,—and Captain Carchidio led his squadron out of the square to charge them; this charge was not altogether successful, as he was killed, with eighteen of his men, eight more of them being wounded.

The Dervishes, however, were completely surprised; not until the Italians were within 400 metres (440 yards) of the enemy's camp was it found necessary to form line. Hidalgo then led his men to the attack; at 8 a.m., being reinforced by the main body, he ordered a charge, and with a shout of "Savoia!" the enemy's camp was entered at the

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point of the bayonet. By 9 o'clock Generals Baratieri and Arimondi were in the market place; from 10 to 11 the troops rested, and then a battalion under Colonel Turitto was sent in pursuit of the flying enemy.

In the town were found many slaves; some of them white men, a hundred of them Egyptian soldiers,—the remains of the brave garrison of Kassala,—others from the surrounding tribes of Beni Amer etc. The Governor proceeded at once to complete his work. He had to provide for the return to their various countries of all the captives; to protect the peaceful cultivators; to burn the corpses; to collect the spoils of war and destroy the supplies that could not be used by the Italians.

The losses were, 1 officer and 27 soldiers killed, 2 chiefs and 39 Ascari wounded,—those of the Dervishes do not seem to be known. But they fled leaving behind them 600 rifles, 700 lances, 100 swords, 52 banners, and 2 mountain guns, besides a store of supplies, ammunition etc. together with a large number of horses, cattle, camels etc. Their numbers before the battle amounted to about 2,000 infantry and 600 cavalry.

This operation, the capture of Kassala, was probably the most brilliant performance of Baratieri's life; as almost every detail was foreseen by him and provided for. He carried 2,500 men over 125 miles in four days without the enemy even suspecting his proximity, and then captured one of their most important towns in less than three hours. The actual fighting was of course not to be compared to that at Agordat, but one can hardly help thinking that for a commander the task required more skill.

Having taken the town, what was to be done with it? The Italians¹ determined to place a garrison there as an outpost against the Dervishes. On July 23rd he departed, leaving 1,000 infantry and two guns under command of Colonel Turitto and returned to Massowah; before he went, a small fort was built, named by order of the Government, Fort Baratieri.

As for the value of this conquest, it has been often decried by Italian writers, especially those of the Anti-African party. They assert that Kassala was too far from Massowah to be of any practical use, that to garrison it even temporarily meant withdrawing over a thousand men who were badly wanted elsewhere, while a permanent occupation was out of the question owing to the clause relating to it in the treaty with England of 1891. They even go so far as to say that Baratieri planned this expedition merely to win a personal success that would counterbalance Arimondi's triumph at Agordat.

As regards the uselessness to their colony of Kassala, they may perhaps be right, for it has since been ceded to England, but there can be no doubt that as a blow directed against the Dervish power this raid was efficacious; and, further, that it immensely increased the prestige of Italy,—a very tangible gain when dealing with savage races. These, after all, are the only two advantages that were ever claimed for it by the Governor.²

¹ General Baratieri says that it was the Italian Government who suggested this course of action, which has since been adversely criticised.

² The Governor urged, that if the Anglo-Egyptians had supplemented his success by advancing as far as Berber, or towards the lower Atbara, all danger of a fresh Dervish advance would have been removed.

APPENDIX B

THE GOVERNOR'S INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

Part II, Chapter VIII

THE Governor himself details his spy-system; he divides the spies into three classes: first, there were the Zaptié, or native carbineers in disguise; secondly, Ascari who had fought against Mangasha in the war of Debra Aila, and were therefore trusted; thirdly, the native peasants in the pay of Italy, who hated the Shoans for their ravages.

These men were not supposed, according to the system, to know each other. Some of them came in every night to report progress, others came in only when some special move of the enemy or other important event was beginning, others were permanently attached to a particular division of the army. Captain Amendune, as head of the department, questioned each man personally, but the Governor also interviewed most of them himself.

Theoretically this system ought to have produced good results, but, practically speaking, Menelik was master of Baratieri in secret intelligence matters—as indeed was natural. Signor Eduardo Ximenes tells a story very much to the point, of how Colonel Brusati of Arimondi's brigade, when returning to camp (Feb. 18th) after a small reconnoitring expedition on his own account, suddenly perceived two men

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hiding in a bush beside the path. Being accompanied by five other men, he went up to the place where they lay and captured—two of the Italian spies! Their excuse for hiding was that they had mistaken him for an Abyssinian—this to an Italian officer with a helmet on his head! Colonel Brusati returned to camp with the firm conviction that they had concealed themselves, either because they had some good reason for fearing discovery, or (more probably) because they meant to take news of his proximity to the Shoans and have him made prisoner.

APPENDIX C

PRESENT CONDITION OF ERYTHREA

Part II, Chapter XII

By a royal decree of February 11th, 1900, the Colony was placed under the rule of a civil government, established at Asmara and within the department of the Minister for Foreign affairs. It now costs Italy eight million lire annually (over £300,000) and is administered by 90 colonial officials and employés of various kinds. Its military force consists of 187 officers, 1,196 men (Italians), and 57 officers with 5,400 natives; the whole being divided into 3 companies of Chasseurs, 6 native battalions, 1 company of Carbineers, 1 squadron and 2 batteries (native) and a company of Engineers.

The Colony includes about 100,000 square kilometres (about the size of Portugal), but its population only amounts to 327,502 natives,—about one-fifth of that which Münzinger found some 30 years ago; this is due to the constant wars and the resulting famines. In 1898 there were 1,741 Europeans in Erythrea, (not including the soldiers) of whom 1,356 were Italians; this was a considerable increase in numbers, as compared with former years, for in 1894 there were only 623 Italians in the Colony. Of other nationalities the Greeks are the most numerous; oddly enough there does not seem to be a single British subject in the Colony of our ally.

As regards commerce: Erythrea exports coffee (chiefly to Italy), gum (to Trieste), hides (to Marseilles and Italy), wax (to Trieste), pearls and mother-of-pearl (to Trieste, Bombay and America), ivory (to Bombay),—also tortoise-shell, civet-cats and various animals; the whole value of her exports amount to about two million lire annually, which is about a quarter of her imports. The chief of these items is undoubtedly the pearl and mother-of-pearl trade which is now being systematized by the “*Societa perlifera italiana*” to whom its monopoly has been granted.

During the three years 1897, '98, and '99, these exports have shown no increase: on the contrary they have even diminished owing to temporary causes,—Mangasha's rebellion which interrupted the coffee trade from Gojjam, and the re-organisation of the pearl and mother-of-pearl industry which reduced the export of pearls from 612,500 lire in 1898 to 180,000 lire in 1899, and the mother-of-pearl from 906,000 lire in 1898 to 508,000 in 1899. (The coffee had sunk from 310,000 lire to 28,000.) On the other hand, apart from these temporary diminutions, there are indubitable signs of rising prosperity—every other product shows a notable increase. A convention has also been signed with the Egyptian Government relative to the trade of the Sudan.

Of the imports, the chief is the rapidly growing trade in cotton goods—(in 1897, Lire 2,370,000; in 1898, Lire 2,489,000; in 1899, Lire 3,231,000).¹ About a quarter of the Erythrean imports come from Italy.

¹ In addition to this, Italy has imported cotton goods to the value of 33,000 lire in 1897, 48,000 lire in 1898, and 90,000 lire in 1899; her returns are kept on a separate list.

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The Government steadily encourages colonization : it makes a gratuitous offer of plots of land not more than one hundred hectares (a hectar is over two acres) in extent, and for a period not exceeding thirty years, to those who undertake to cultivate it in the European way, and not to sublet to natives. Twelve Italians availed themselves of this offer during the year 1899. In various parts of the Colony the agricultural and other experiments still continue ; in Hamacen there is hope of discovering gold.

Perhaps the most conclusive sign of increased prosperity under Italian rule is that offered by the "tributes" exacted from the natives : these taxes amount to two or three per cent on their cattle and grain, and hitherto they have shown a marked increase during each year since the end of the war. At the end of 1896 they amounted to only 312,190 lire, in 1897 to 353,475 lire, in 1898 to 446,981 lire, and in 1899 to 587,650 lire.

There is therefore good ground for hoping that some day Italy may find in Erythrea a reward for all her past sacrifices, and enjoy those benefits, to win which for their native land, so many thousands of brave men have given their lives.

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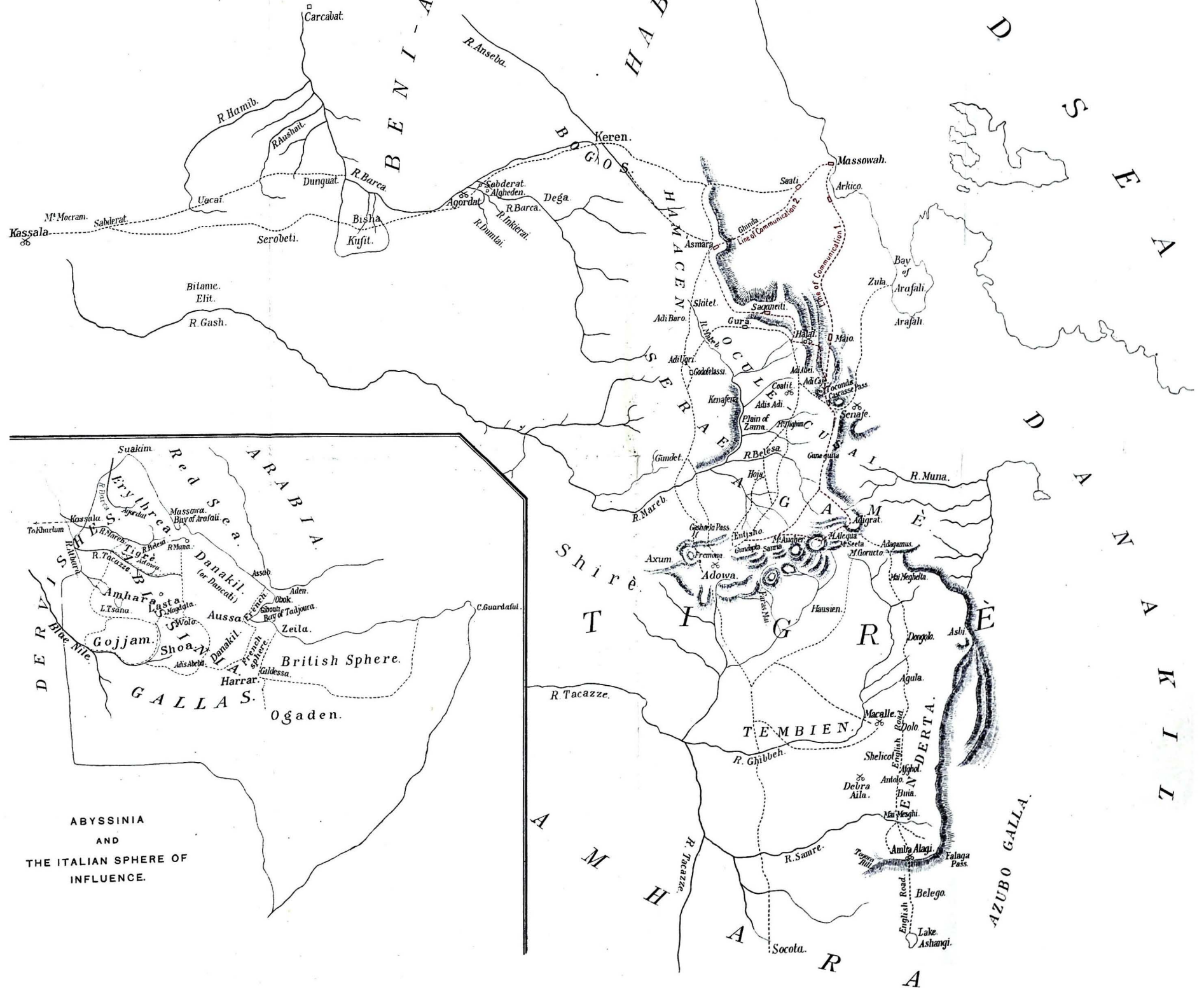
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MAP OF ITALIAN CAMPAIGNS

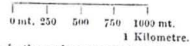
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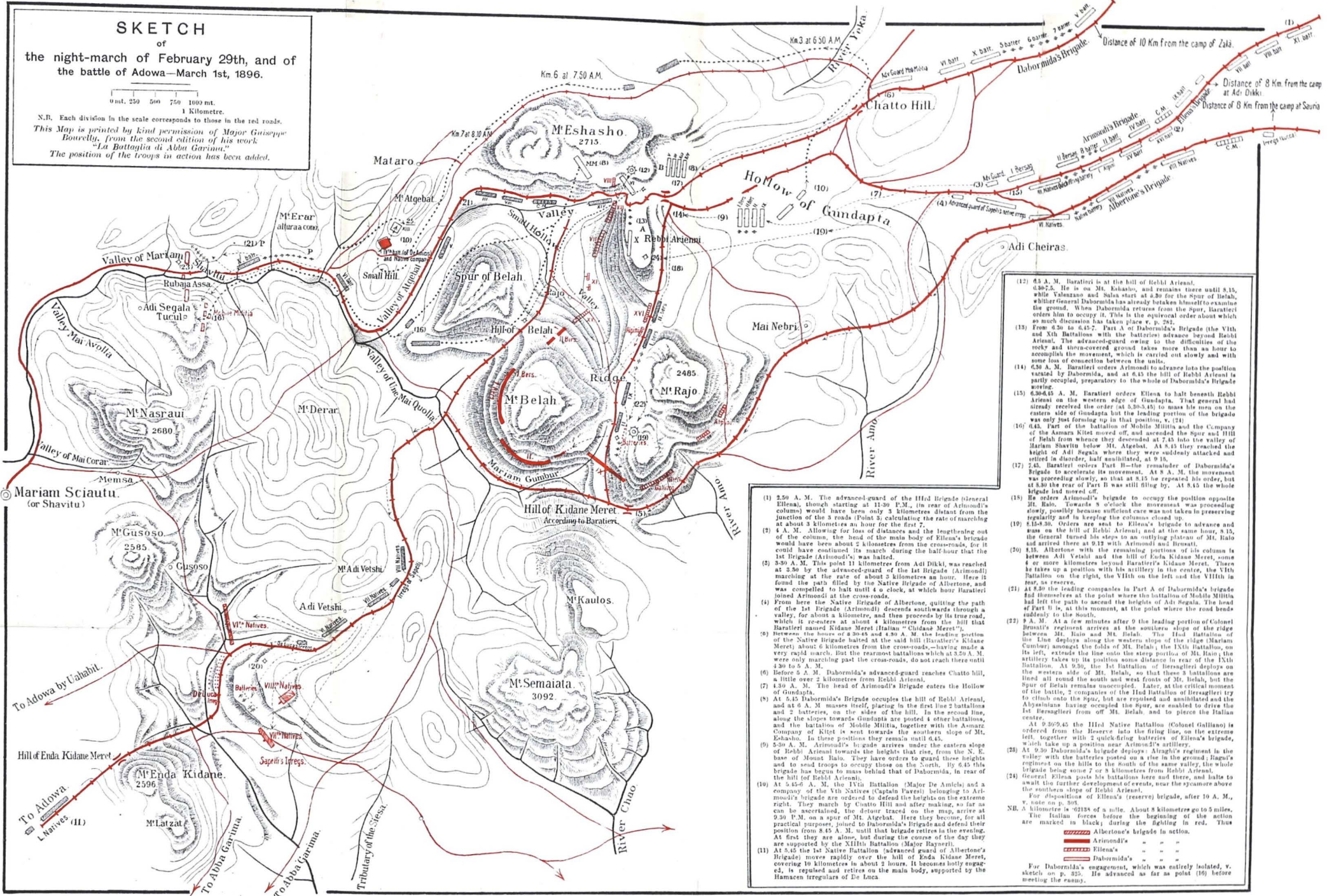


SKETCH

of
the night-march of February 29th, and of
the battle of Adowa—March 1st, 1896.



N.B. Each division in the scale corresponds to those in the red roads.
This Map is printed by kind permission of Major Guiseppe
Bovelli, from the second edition of his work
"La Battaglia di Abba Garima."
The position of the troops in action has been added.



- (1) 2.50 A. M. The advanced-guard of the 1st Brigade (General Eliena), though starting at 11.30 P. M., (the rear of Arimondi's column) would have been only 3 kilometres distant from the junction of the 3 roads (Point 3) calculating the rate of marching at about 3 kilometres an hour for the first 7.
 - (2) 4 A. M. Allowing for loss of distances and the lengthening out of the column, the head of the main body of Eliena's brigade would have been about 5 kilometres from the cross-roads, for it could have continued its march during the half-hour that the 1st Brigade (Arimondi's) was halted.
 - (3) 3.30 A. M. This point 11 kilometres from Adi Dikka, was reached at 3.30 by the advanced-guard of the 1st Brigade (Arimondi) marching at the rate of about 3 kilometres an hour. Here it found the path filled by the Native Brigade of Albertone, and was compelled to halt until 4 o'clock, at which hour Baratieri joined Arimondi at the cross-roads.
 - (4) From here the Native Brigade of Albertone, quitting the path of the 1st Brigade (Arimondi) descends southwards through a valley, for about a kilometre, and then proceeds by its true road, which it reaches at about 4 kilometres from the hill that Baratieri named Kidane Meret (Italian "Kidane Meret").
 - (5) Between the hours of 4.30 and 4.30 A. M. the leading portion of the Native Brigade halted at the said hill (Kidane Meret) about 6 kilometres from the cross-roads, having made a very rapid march. But the rear-most battalions which at 3.50 A. M. were only marching past the cross-roads, do not reach there until 4.30 to 5 A. M.
 - (6) Before 5 A. M. Dabormida's advanced-guard reaches Chatto Hill, a little over 2 kilometres from Kidane Meret.
 - (7) 4.30 A. M. The head of Arimondi's brigade enters the Hollow of Gundapta.
 - (8) At 5.45 Dabormida's Brigade occupies the hill of Rebbi Arsenai, and at 6 A. M. masses itself, placing in the first line 2 battalions and 2 batteries, on the side of the hill. In the second line, along the slopes towards Gundapta are posted 4 other battalions, and the battalion of Mobile Militia, together with the Asmara Company of Rifles sent towards the southern slope of Mt. Esasho. In these positions they remain until 6.45.
 - (9) 5.30 A. M. Arimondi's brigade arrives under the eastern slope of Rebbi Arsenai towards the heights that rise, from the N. E. base of Mount Halo. They have orders to guard these heights and to send troops to occupy those on the north. By 6.45 this brigade has begun to mass behind that of Dabormida, in rear of the hill of Rebbi Arsenai.
 - (10) At 6.45-6 A. M. the VIII Battalion (Major De Amicis) and a company of the VII Natives (Captain Paresi), belonging to Arimondi's brigade are ordered to defend the heights on the extreme right. They march by Chatto Hill and after making, so far as can be ascertained, the detour traced on the map, arrive at 9.50 P. M. on a spur of Mt. Algebat. Here they become, for all practical purposes, joined to Dabormida's brigade, and defend their position from 8.45 A. M. until that brigade retires in the evening. At first they are alone, but during the course of the day they are supported by the XIII Battalion (Major Rappelli).
 - (11) At 8.45 the 1st Native Brigade (advanced guard of Albertone's Brigade) moves rapidly over the hill of Enda Kidane Meret, covering 10 kilometres in about 2 hours. It becomes hotly engaged, is repulsed and retires on the main body, supported by the Hamacen irregulars of De Luca.
 - (12) 6.5 A. M. Baratieri is at the hill of Rebbi Arsenai.
 - (13) From 6.30 to 6.45. Part A of Dabormida's Brigade (the VIII and XII Battalions with the batteries) advances beyond Rebbi Arsenai. The advanced-guard owing to the difficulties of the rocky and thorn-covered ground takes more than an hour to accomplish the movement, which is carried out slowly and with some loss of connection between the units.
 - (14) 6.30 A. M. Baratieri orders Arimondi to advance into the position vacated by Dabormida, and at 6.45 the hill of Rebbi Arsenai is partly occupied, preparatory to the whole of Dabormida's Brigade moving.
 - (15) 6.30-6.45 A. M. Baratieri orders Eliena to halt beneath Rebbi Arsenai on the western edge of Gundapta. That general had already received the order (at 6.30-6.45) to mass his men on the eastern side of Gundapta but the leading portion of the brigade was only just forming up in that position, v. (24).
 - (16) 6.45. Part of the battalion of Mobile Militia and the Company of the Asmara Rifles moved off, and ascended the Spur and Hill of Belah from whence they descended at 7.45 into the valley of Haran Shavitu below Mt. Algebat. At 8.15 they reached the height of Adi Segala where they were suddenly attacked and retired in disorder, half annihilated, at 9.15.
 - (17) 7.45. Baratieri orders Part B—the remainder of Dabormida's Brigade to accelerate its movement. At 8 A. M. the movement was proceeding slowly, so that at 8.15 he repeated his order, but at 8.30 the rear of Part B was still filing by. At 8.45 the whole brigade had moved off.
 - (18) He orders Arimondi's brigade to occupy the position opposite Mt. Halo. Towards 8 o'clock the movement was proceeding slowly, possibly because sufficient care was not taken in preserving regularity and in keeping the columns closed up.
 - (19) 8.15-8.30. Orders are sent to Eliena to advance and mass on the hill of Rebbi Arsenai; and at the same hour, 8.15, the general turned his steps to an outlying plateau of Mt. Halo and arrived there at 9.15 with Arimondi and Baratieri.
 - (20) 8.15. Baratieri, with the remaining portions of his column, some 4 or more kilometres beyond Baratieri's Kidane Meret. There he takes up a position with his artillery in the centre, the VIII Battalion on the right, the VIII on the left and the XIII in rear, as reserve.
 - (21) At 8.20 the leading companies in Part A of Dabormida's brigade find themselves at the point where the battalion of Mobile Militia had left the path to ascend the heights of Adi Segala. The head of Part B is, at this moment, at the point where the road bends suddenly to the South.
 - (22) 8 A. M. At a few minutes after 9 the leading portion of Colonel Rappelli's regiment arrives at the southern slope of the ridge between Mt. Halo and Mt. Belah. The 11th Battalion of the Line deploys along the western slope of the ridge (Marian Gumbur) amongst the folds of Mt. Belah, the IXth Battalion, on its left, extends the line onto the steep portion of Mt. Halo; the artillery takes up its position some distance in rear of the IXth Battalion. At 9.30, the 1st Battalion of Bersaglieri deploys on the western side of Mt. Halo, so that these 3 battalions are lined all round the south-west foot of Mt. Halo, but the Spur of Belah remains unoccupied. Later, at the critical moment of the battle, 2 companies of the 11th Battalion of Bersaglieri try to climb onto the spur, but are repulsed and annihilated and the Abyssinians having occupied the Spur, are enabled to drive the 1st Bersaglieri from off Mt. Halo, and to pierce the Italian centre.
 - (23) At 9.35-9.45 the VIII Native Battalion (Colonel Galliano) is ordered from the Reserve into the firing line, on the extreme left, together with 2 quick-firing batteries of Eliena's brigade, which take up a position near Arimondi's artillery.
 - (24) At 9.30 Dabormida's brigade deploys. Alghisi's regiment in the valley with the batteries posted on a rise in the ground; Ragni's regiment on the hills to the south of the same valley; the whole brigade being some 7 or 8 kilometres from Rebbi Arsenai.
 - (25) General Eliena posts his battalions here and there, and leads to swallow the furthest, near the spurs above the southern slope of Rebbi Arsenai.
- For dispositions of Eliena's (reserve) brigade, after 10 A. M., v. note on p. 305.
N.B. A kilometre is 0.62138 of a mile. About 8 kilometres go to 5 miles.
The Italian forces before the beginning of the action are marked in black; during the fighting in red. Thus:
Arimondi's brigade in action.
Eliena's " " " "
Dabormida's " " " "
- For Dabormida's engagement, which was entirely isolated, v. sketch on p. 325. He advanced as far as point (16) before meeting the enemy.