



# The London Gazette.

Published by Authority.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 1865.

Foreign Office, October 31, 1865.

THE following Despatch has been addressed by Earl Russell to Colonel Stanton, Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General in Egypt:—

Foreign Office,  
Sir, October 5, 1865.

ALTHOUGH it is too late to give you any directions for the guidance of Mr. Rassam beyond those which I have already transmitted by telegraph, it may be useful, in order to prevent misconceptions, that I should enable you to state upon any proper occasion what has been and is the policy of the British Government regarding Abyssinia.

It should be borne in mind that Abyssinia is composed of several distinct provinces, some of which are separated from each other by lofty mountains and by rivers which are impassable during a portion of the year.

Hence these different provinces have often been ruled by separate princes or chiefs (Dedjatch), independent of each other.

In 1841, Captain Harris was sent from Bombay to the King of Shoa, with whom he concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, on the 16th of November, 1841.

In the same year, the Ruler of Tigre Ras Obeay, or Ubie, called Ras of Abyssinia, sent Mr. Coffin, an English traveller, with a letter and presents for Her Majesty.

On Mr. Coffin's arrival at Cairo, he was informed, through Colonel Barnett, in December, 1841, by direction of Lord Aberdeen, that he need not proceed further on his journey to England, and that he might deliver to Colonel Barnett any letter with which he was charged.

Mr. Coffin accordingly delivered the letter from Ras Ubie (together with presents) to Colonel Barnett, who sent the letter to England, but it cannot be ascertained whether the presents were also sent, the only allusion to them being found in a despatch from Colonel Barnett, dated September 19, 1841, in which he says they were still with Mr. Coffin, at Cairo.

No reply, however, was returned to this letter, and Ras Ubie was thereupon so angry, that he threatened violence to Mr. Coffin for not bringing him a return present from the Queen.

In January, 1848, Lord Palmerston, with a view to establish commercial relations with Abyssinia, appointed Mr. Plowden, Consul for that country, and directed him to reside at Massowah.

Mr. Plowden was informed, in his letter of appointment, that he was sent to Massowah for the protection of British trade with Abyssinia and the countries adjacent thereto.

Consul Plowden proceeded to Gondar and concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Ras Ali, on the 2nd November, 1849.

By this Treaty it was provided, that His Majesty of Abyssinia would receive an Ambassador from Her Britannic Majesty, and "Her Britannic Majesty would, in the same manner, receive and protect any Ambassador, Envoy, or Consul, whom His Majesty of Abyssinia, or his successors, might see fit to appoint."

But in 1854, Ras Ali was overthrown by one of his sons-in-law, who induced the Coptic Bishop to crown him Emperor of Abyssinia. This person was the present Emperor Theodore, who, so far from insisting on the observance of the Treaty of 1849, refused altogether to recognize that Treaty.

Consul Plowden was told by the British Government in 1857, that the Emperor was bound in good faith to recognize that Treaty, and that if he objected to any of its provisions he should propose modifications.

But from the triumph of the Emperor Theodore in 1856, to the present day, the Treaty has been a dead letter.

It may be argued that the British Government ought to have insisted on the validity of the Treaty on the one hand, and to have protected the Emperor of Abyssinia from the Turks on the other.

But considering the short tenure of power in the Abyssinian Kings, whatever be their title, the difficulty of reaching with a regular British force their seats of Empire, the little value of a victory gained at Gondar and Shoa, the risk of failure and the certainty of expense, it has seemed to the British Government a preferable course to withdraw, as much as possible, from Abyssinian engagements, Abyssinian alliances, and British interference in Abyssinia.

This course, however, has not been taken without giving rise to groundless reproaches, many