

HANDBOOKS PREPARED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE  
HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 126

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# ERITREA

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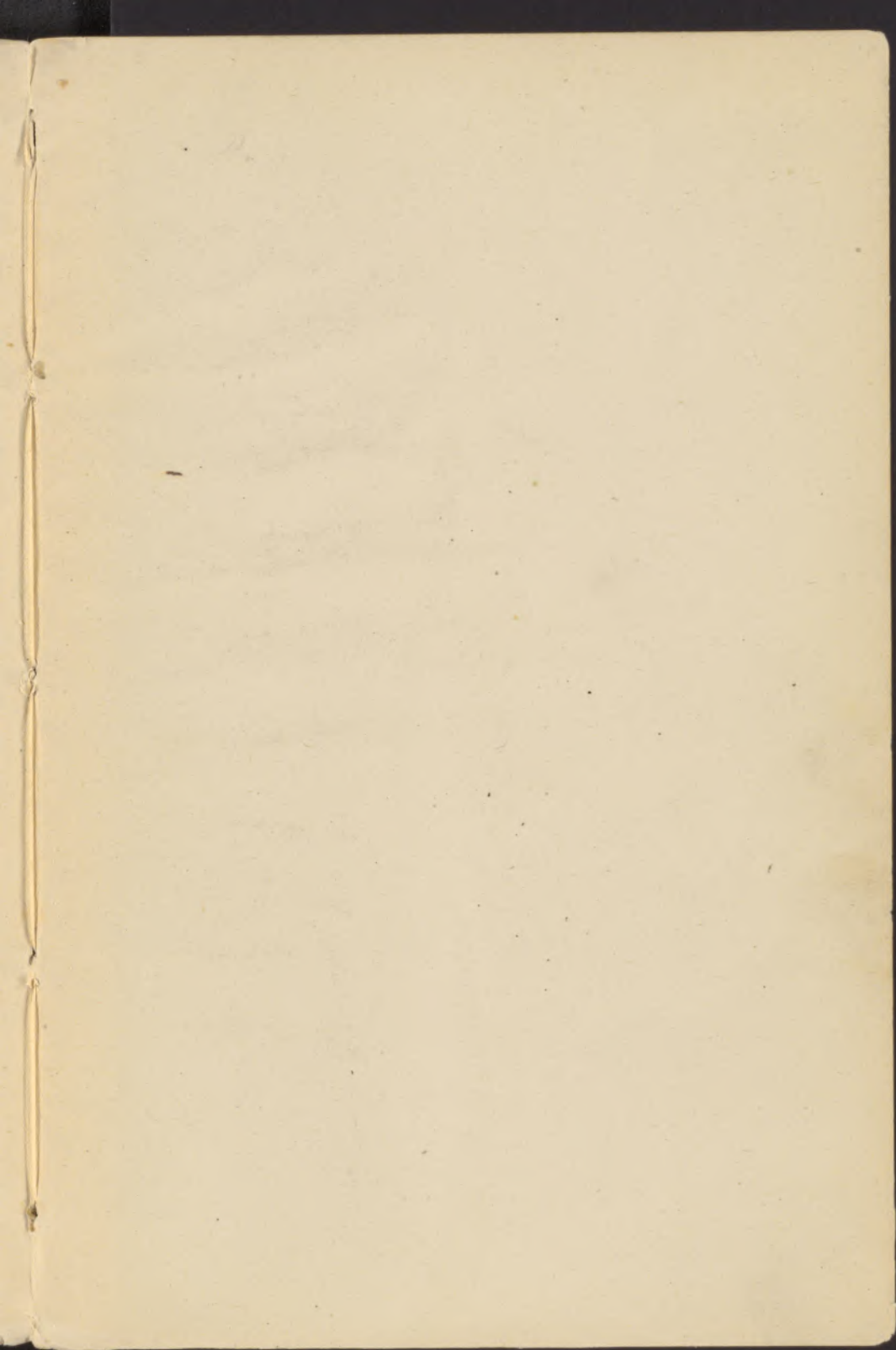
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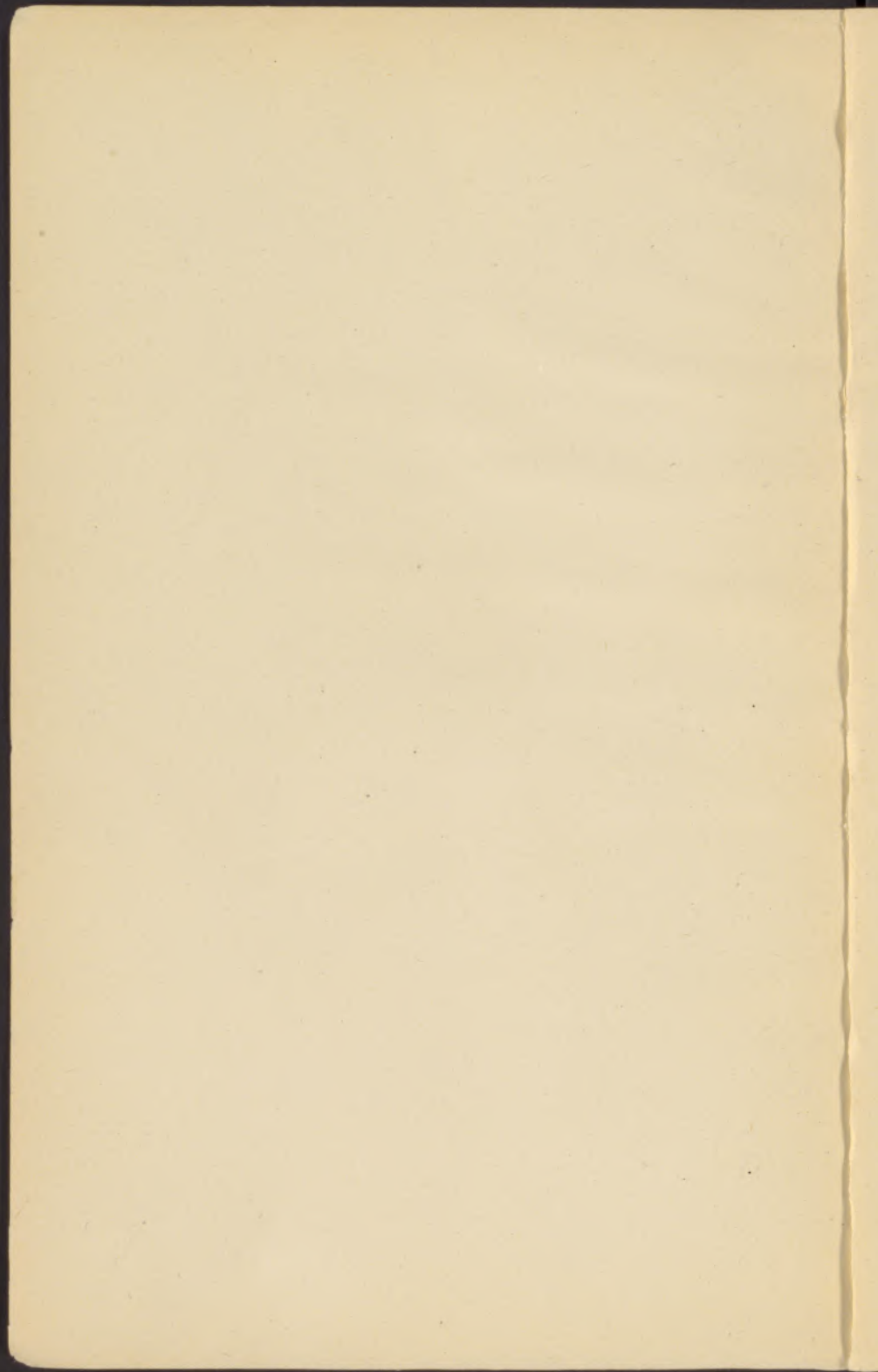


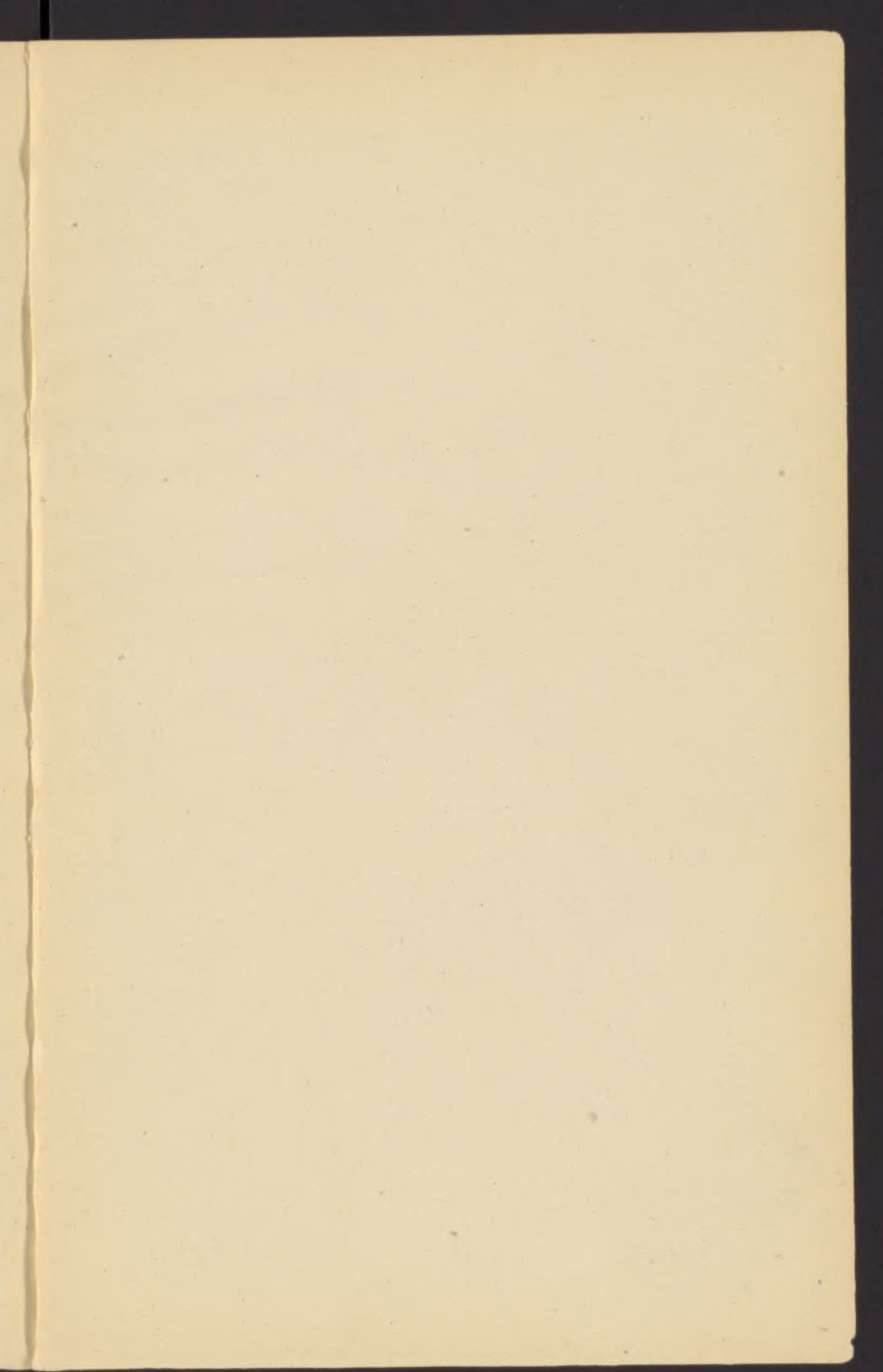


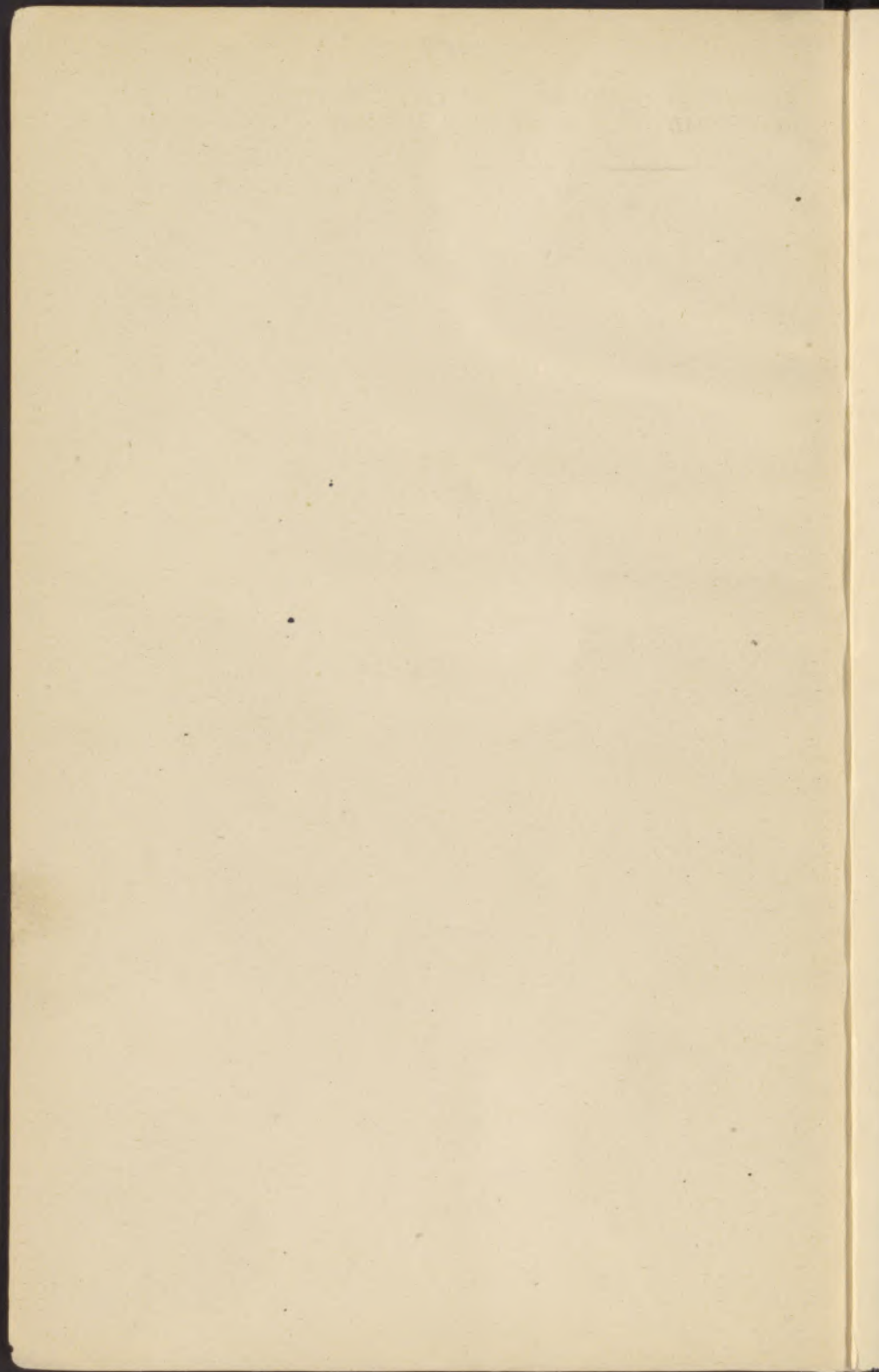
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HISTORICAL SECTION OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE.—No. 126

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# ERITREA

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## Editorial Note.

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In the spring of 1917 the Foreign Office, in connection with the preparation which they were making for the work of the Peace Conference, established a special section whose duty it should be to provide the British Delegates to the Peace Conference with information in the most convenient form—geographical, economic, historical, social, religious and political—respecting the different countries, districts, islands, &c., with which they might have to deal. In addition, volumes were prepared on certain general subjects, mostly of an historical nature, concerning which it appeared that a special study would be useful.

The historical information was compiled by trained writers on historical subjects, who (in most cases) gave their services without any remuneration. For the geographical sections valuable assistance was given by the Intelligence Division (Naval Staff) of the Admiralty; and for the economic sections, by the War Trade Intelligence Department, which had been established by the Foreign Office. Of the maps accompanying the series, some were prepared by the above-mentioned department of the Admiralty, but the bulk of them were the work of the Geographical Section of the General Staff (Military Intelligence Division) of the War Office.

Now that the Conference has nearly completed its task, the Foreign Office, in response to numerous enquiries and requests, has decided to issue the books for public use, believing that they will be useful to students of history, politics, economics and foreign affairs, to publicists generally and to business men and travellers. It is hardly necessary to say that some of the subjects dealt with in the series have not in fact come under discussion at the Peace Conference; but, as the books treating of them contain valuable information, it has been thought advisable to include them.

It must be understood that, although the series of volumes was prepared under the authority, and is now issued with the sanction, of the Foreign Office, that Office is not to be regarded as guaranteeing the accuracy of every statement which they contain or as identifying itself with all the opinions expressed in the several volumes; the books were not prepared in the Foreign Office itself, but are in the nature of information provided for the Foreign Office and the British Delegation.

The books are now published, with a few exceptions, substantially as they were issued for the use of the Delegates. No attempt has been made to bring them up to date, for, in the first place, such a process would have entailed a great loss of time and a prohibitive expense; and, in the second, the political and other conditions of a great part of Europe and of the Nearer and Middle East are still unsettled and in such a state of flux that any attempt to describe them would have been incorrect or misleading. The books are therefore to be taken as describing, in general, *ante-bellum* conditions, though in a few cases, where it seemed specially desirable, the account has been brought down to a later date.

G. W. PROTHERO,

*General Editor and formerly*

*January 1920.*

*Director of the Historical Section.*

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## I. GEOGRAPHY PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL

### (1) POSITION AND FRONTIERS

THE Italian colony of Eritrea is situated on the west coast of the Red Sea, but also includes the Dahlak (Daalac) archipelago off Massawa, and the islands farther south off the coast of the Danakil country. It has an area of about 45,800 square miles, of which about 560 represent the islands, and its extreme points are, in the north, Ras Kasar ( $18^{\circ} 2' N.$ ); in the south, Daddato ( $12^{\circ} 22' N.$ ); in the east, Ras Dumeira ( $43^{\circ} 6' E.$ ); and in the west, Mount Abu Gamel ( $36^{\circ} 23' E.$ ). The Colony marches in the north-west with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, in the south-west with Abyssinia, and in the south-east with French Somaliland.

The boundary between Eritrea and the Sudan runs from Ras Kasar in a general south-westerly direction to the confluence of the Barka (Baraka) and Ambakta; it then follows the Barka to the confluence of the Dada, follows this latter to its source at the foot of the Eskenye Range, and then proceeds in a general south-south-westerly direction till it reaches the highest point of Mount Abu Gamel; from here it runs a little east of south till it reaches the Setit opposite the mouth of the Khor Royan. This boundary was settled by the Agreement of December 7, 1898 (with the subsequent *procès-verbal* of January 19, 1904); the Agreements of June 1, 1899, April 16, 1901, and May 15, 1902; and by the report of the boundary commissioners of February 18, 1903.

Between Eritrea and Abyssinia the boundary ascends the Setit to its junction with the Tomsa (the relative treaty has "Maieteb," i.e. Mai Teb, but it was later agreed that this was due to a cartographical error) and then strikes across country to the junction of the

Mareb with the Mai Ambessa, continuing along the Mareb, Belesa, and Muna. From the most easterly point of the line established by these rivers the frontier runs in a general south-easterly direction parallel to and at an average distance of 60 kilometres ( $37\frac{1}{4}$  miles) from the coast, until it reaches French Somaliland. This line was settled by the treaty of July 10, 1900, with its annexe; the treaty of May 15, 1902, and the convention of May 16, 1908.

The southern boundary (settled by the protocol of July 10, 1901), starting from Ras Dumeira, runs in a general south-westerly direction from Bisidira, on the Weima, to Daddato, where it meets the frontier between Eritrea and Abyssinia.

The frontiers do not correspond to any division, either geographical or ethnical, nor could they be made to do so, except by very far-reaching alterations.

## (2) SURFACE, COAST, AND RIVER SYSTEM

### *Surface*

Eritrea may be divided into two parts, (1) the whole north and main body of the Colony; (2) the narrow strip of mountainous country along the edge of the Danakil desert. The two are separated by a depression beginning at the Gulf of Zula and extending southwards beyond the frontier in a series of sandy plains, sometimes below sea level.

The narrow coastal strip of Danakil consists for the most part of a series of table-topped mountains with an average height of some 3,000 feet, rising from the Buri peninsula to south of Edd and thence falling again and broadening as far as Assab. Above the flat summits some volcanic cones emerge. The Buri peninsula, which forms the northern end of this coastal zone, is a low and sandy region with salt pans and low hills.

The northern area, which forms the main part of the Colony, may be subdivided into seven regions, namely, the coast zone in which Massawa is situated; the eastern slopes of the Abyssinian plateau; the plateau

itself; the region of the *rore* which continues the plateau to the north; the eastern slopes of the *rore*; the valleys towards the Sudan; and the region of plains towards the Sudan. These are described in order.

(i) The coast zone of Massawa begins north of the isolated Mount Gedem. It is 20 to 25 miles broad, and is occupied partly by sandy tracts with dunes, partly by terraced elevations from 700 to 1,000 ft. above the sea. It is intersected by a number of torrent beds, mostly dry.

(ii) The eastern scarp of the northern end of the great plateau of Abyssinia is divided into a number of buttresses by valleys, usually narrow and winding, which widen from place to place into broad basins lying parallel to the edge of the plateau. The sides of these valleys are steep, and often culminate in high crests (Amba Debra, the highest, being over 9,000 ft. in height); the rise of the valley bottoms from the coast plain, however, is not specially abrupt. The chief valleys, which in general radiate from the country between Addi Kaie and the frontier, are on the north those of the Aligede, Shagede, Hadas, Komaile, and Selima, and on the east those of the Dandero and Endeli.

(iii) Of the Abyssinian plateau only the northern end falls within Eritrea, occupying the south-eastern portion of the northern region under discussion. Large parts of this region, such as Hamasen and Serae, are characterized by the presence of vast basaltic flats. The plain itself (6,600 to 7,200 ft.) is cut up by deep rifts, while Mount Takara (8,500 ft.) is an important hydrographic centre. Around Asmara, where the country lies at an elevation of 7,700 ft., there are low terraces. This northern termination of the plateau, here as elsewhere, is highest at its eastern edge, and has a gradual slope towards the west. On the eastern edge is the mountain group of Sowaira, which contains the greatest heights in the Colony, rising to nearly 10,000 ft. On the west is the Senafe depression. Around Senafe the mountains consist of isolated and much weathered

masses, of which Amba Matara, the most characteristic, reaches nearly 9,000 ft.

(iv) Between the region of the *roro* on the north, and the Hamasen plateau on the south, the Mensa highlands and the Senahit mountains, encircling the Keren depression, form a transitional region.

In the region of the *roro* the plateau has been dismembered into single mountain groups separated by great valleys which furrow the whole country. The plateau is in this part represented only by elevated depressions surrounded by mountain crests, and these, the *roro*, lie in two series on either side of the Anseba valley, forming the Habab country on the east and the Maria on the west. The most notable *roro* are those of Asgede in the Habab country (greatest heights over 8,000 ft.) and the Big and Little Hagar plateaux (said to reach nearly 9,000 ft.).

(v) In addition to the elevated depressions just described, the Habab and Mensa countrysides are formed in part by slopes descending to the coastal zone, which form a more northerly continuation of the scarp of the plateau proper.

(vi) The valleys towards the Sudan, which form the country west of the plateau and the *roro*, are fairly broad and more gradual in slope than those on the east. The chief are those of the Lower Anseba, the right-hand tributaries of the Barka, the middle Mareb (or Gash), and middle Setit (or Takazye). The ridges between these valleys are formed of irregularly disposed groups of heights.

(vii) The plains towards the Sudan are an immediate westerly continuation of the last region. The flat alluvial tracts increase considerably, and the rocky hills gradually appear like islands in the deposits of soil. In places the plains are traversed by mountain belts, and here the rivers run in relatively narrow and winding channels.

### *Coast*

The coast line of Eritrea, which is about 670 miles in length, is divided into two parts by the Gulf of Zula,



the first running south-south-east from Ras Kasar to the Gulf, the second south-east from the Buri peninsula to Ras Dumeira.

The first part is low, uniform, and sandy, with only one important indentation, the Bay of Arkiko, on the northern side of which the islands of Massawa and Taulud and the dykes connecting them form the port of Massawa. The second part is more irregular and broken. The chief bays are those of Hawakil, Anfila, Edd, Barasoli, Beilul, and Assab.

Of the islands which lie off the coast, the Dahlak archipelago consists of low coralline islands with very broken coasts, while the islands off the Danakil coast are high and volcanic.

The only port is Massawa, which is accessible at all seasons, and offers secure shelter to large ships, although the entrance is sometimes difficult. In addition there are roadsteads used only by native dhows. The best of these are Assab and Raheita, but there are many others.

#### *River System*

The rivers of Eritrea may be divided into three systems: those which flow towards the Nile, those which flow towards the Red Sea, and those which are lost in the internal basin of the Plain of Salt. The chief rivers of the first system are the Mareb (Gash) and the Setit; of the second, the Barka with its tributary, the Anseba; of the third, the Endeli. None of the rivers of the Colony has running surface water all the year round throughout its course. The larger are unfordable for some time during the rainy season, and by inundating considerable tracts of country make communications impossible.

Certain of the rivers traversing the coastal zone of Massawa, since they have their sources in the plateau region with summer rains and their lower courses in a region with winter rains, profit by both rainy seasons, and are therefore important for agriculture. In most of the rivers water can be found even in the dry season at various levels below the bed.

### (3) CLIMATE

The climate of Eritrea exhibits many variations, both in temperature and in the amount and distribution of the rainfall. The three factors chiefly determining this variety are the geographical position of the Colony; the great differences of altitude; and the varying distance of the sea, the effect of the last being reinforced by the fact that the greatest elevations are found in the mountain barrier running parallel to and only a little way from the coast.

#### *Rainfall*

From the point of view of rainfall the Colony is divided by this mountain barrier into two regions: a maritime zone, characterized by winter rains, to the east; and a continental zone, with the main rains in summer, to the west. Between the two the edge of the plateau and the eastern *rore* of the Habab country form a transitional region with thick winter mists and dews and summer rains.

The maritime zone may be further sub-divided into (a) a region comprising the islands and a strip of littoral a few miles wide, separated by the Gulf of Zula into a northern part, with a yearly mean of less than 8 in. (200 mm.) (Massawa type), and a southern with a yearly mean of 1 in. or 2 in. (27-30 mm.) (Assab type); (b) a plain lying between this region and the eastward slopes of the plateau (no observations); and (c) the wooded slopes lying between 3,300-6,000 ft. above sea level and extending from the northern frontier to the Dandero valley, with a yearly mean of 13-17 in. (350 to 430 mm.). West of this is the transitional area already mentioned, and then follows the continental zone, in which the rainfall decreases from east to west and south to north. This zone may also be sub-divided into three regions: (d) the plateau and western *rore*, generally more than 6,000 ft. above sea level, with a yearly mean of 21 in. (545 mm.); (e) the valleys and western slopes down to a height of about 3,300 ft. above sea level, with a

yearly mean of 20-25 in. (500-640 mm.); and (f) the plains towards the Sudan with a yearly mean of 12 in. (300 mm.).

### *Temperature*

The highest mean temperatures occur on the coast. They decrease westwards as the effect of elevation makes itself felt, and then increase again towards the Sudan. The mean daily variation is small on the coast, but considerable in the inland regions.

The following figures, for the same regions as those above, show the general character of the various regions of the Colony:—

(a) Yearly mean 86° F. (30° C.) or over. Hottest month, July (mean temp. 94° F., 34·5° C.); coolest, January or February (mean temp. 78° F., 25·5°–26° C.). The humidity is high.

(b) The humidity is less in this region, and the variation of temperature greater, but observations are lacking.

(c) Yearly mean 76° F. (24·5° C.). June or July, nearly 86° F. (30° C.); January, 64° F. (18° C.).

Transitional region, yearly mean 63·5° F. (17·5° C.). April, about 68° F. (20° C.); December, 60° F. (15·5° C.).

(d) Yearly mean 67° F. (19·5° C.). May, 70·5° F. (21·5° C.); December 63·5° F. (17·5° C.).

(e) Yearly mean about 70° F. (21° C.). May, 78° F. (25·5° C.); January, 65° F. (18·5° C.).

(f) Yearly mean 80·5° F. (27° C.). May, 89·5° F. (32° C.); January, 70° F. (21° C.).

### (4) SANITARY CONDITIONS

The lower portions of the Colony, including the plains, valleys, and mountain slopes up to a height of about 5,000 ft., are unsuitable for white colonization, owing to their heat and humidity and to the presence of malaria. The high plateau, on the other hand, is temperate and healthy.

Apart from affections due to the heat (erythema, boils, anæmia, various kinds of heat-strokes and the like), malaria is the disease against which Europeans have chiefly to guard. It is especially prevalent during and just after the rains.

The natives are subject to numerous diseases, of which the most serious and widespread are venereal diseases, skin-diseases (itch is universal among the Abyssinians), leprosy, eye affections, affections of the respiratory organs, and intestinal disorders, especially those caused by parasites. Small-pox frequently appears, especially along the caravan roads out of Abyssinia. In the Baria country, south and south-west of Agordat, a disease caused by *flaria medinensis* (Guinea worm) is widespread.

With reasonable care Europeans can avoid all these.

#### (5) RACE AND LANGUAGE

The peoples of Eritrea, though very various in language, customs, traditions, and religion, are now considered to represent one anthropological type, namely, the Hamitic. There have been infiltrations of Arabic blood from the east and of negro blood from the west. Leaving aside the inhabitants of the commercial, and especially the maritime, centres, there is only one small group of Semites in the Colony, the Rasheida of the coast region near Ras Kasar.

The rest of the population may be divided, on a linguistic basis, into the two following groups: (a) the peoples speaking Tigray and Tigre, two languages descended from the ancient Ge'ez, though quite distinct from each other, and if not Semitic exhibiting a large Semitic element; (b) the peoples speaking either a Hamitic language or a language of uncertain connections; these are, in Eritrea, the Bejas, Sahos (or Shohos), Kunamas, Danakils (or Afars), Barias, Bilens, Jalins (or Jaalins), Somalis.

Apart from these, Arabic is of some importance as a language largely used by the merchants. Some

peoples, such as part of the Bilens, the Barias and Kunamas, and others, are bilingual.

The use of Italian is said to be gradually spreading among all the natives.

## (6) POPULATION

### *Distribution*

In 1908 there was a population of 274,944 natives and 2,930 whites. As far as the natives were concerned, however, these figures were only approximate and did not include all the Danakils on the Italian side of the frontier. There may be supposed to have been between 300,000 and 335,000 in 1914.

The greatest density is found in the regions inhabited by Abyssinian populations, where a maximum of 114 per square mile is found. The minimum occurs in the Danakil country, where the figure is less than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per square mile. On the whole it may be said that the north, west and south-west of the northern area of the Colony has a density of between 3 and 6 inhabitants per square mile, and that the south-east of it has a density varying ordinarily between 6 and 35 per square mile.

### *Towns and Villages*

Permanently inhabited localities are most numerous in the Abyssinian region. These have the form of small villages grouped round a church, generally in a prominent position. Among the other peoples the villages are more scattered, and in many cases only temporarily inhabited. The nomad camping places are usually near water-holes, and hence are mostly unchanging and have names of their own.

Outside the Abyssinian region practically all the centres of population are trading centres, and therefore usually have a mixed population. On the coast the chief town is **Massawa**, with its suburbs of Otumlo

and Monkullo; smaller settlements are Arkiko, Zula, and Assab. Inland the chief centres lie on commercial routes, and many have grown or developed round Italian military stations. The largest of these inland towns are Asmara (the present capital), Ginda, Saganeti, Addi Kaie, Addi Ugri, Keren, and Agordat, with populations varying between about nine and two thousand.

## II. POLITICAL HISTORY

### CHRONOLOGICAL SUMMARY

- 1869 Rubattino Company acquires Bay of Assab.  
 1879 Commissioner appointed and force landed in Bay of Assab.  
 1880 Protectorate established over Raheita.  
 1882 Cession of territories by Rubattino Company to Italian Government.  
 1884 Treaty at Adowa between Great Britain (Egypt) and Abyssinia.  
 1885 Occupation of Massawa and Saati.  
 1886-7 Crisis with Abyssinia.  
 1888 (April) Withdrawal of Negus.  
 1888 (June) Dispute as to taxation of French residents in Massawa.  
 1889 Death of Negus John. Treaty of Ucciali with Menelik.  
 1890 Italian possessions consolidated as Eritrea.  
 1891 Rupture with Menelik over interpretation of Ucciali Treaty.  
 1893 Menelik denounces Ucciali Treaty.  
 1893-4 Victories over Mahdists.  
 1896 Italy defeated by Abyssinia at Adowa.  
 1898 Change from military to civil administration.  
 1899 Definition of Sudan frontier.  
 1900-1 Agreements defining boundary between Raheita Protectorate and French Somaliland.  
 1902 Annexation of Raheita. Delimitation of Ethiopian frontier.  
 1906 Commercial Treaty with Menelik at Addis Abbaba.  
 Treaty of London, guaranteeing integrity of Ethiopia.  
 1907 Agreement as to Ethiopian frontier finally approved.  
 1908 Question of Danakil frontier settled.

*The Rubattino Company.*—The opening of the Suez Canal having increased the commercial importance of the Red Sea, the Italian Government as early as 1869 authorized the Rubattino Shipping Company to acquire from the petty sultans of the locality the territory of the Bay of Assab, near the Straits of Bab el-Mandeb. Further acquisitions from

the Sultan of Raheita (1879, 1880) extended the territory and included the islands opposite and the establishment of a protectorate over Raheita. In December 1879 a small Italian force landed in the Bay of Assab; and a civil commissioner was appointed to administer the territory. Both Turkey and Egypt protested and refused to recognise the new state of things brought about by the Italian occupation. In June 1882 the Chamber approved by 147 votes to 72 the convention which had been signed in the preceding March by the Foreign Minister and the Ministers of the Treasury and of Agriculture with the Rubattino Company, by which the territories in the Bay of Assab were ceded to the Italian Government. In July of the same year a grant of 60,000 lire was made and "an Italian colony in the territory of Assab, on the western coast of the Red Sea," was legally established and "placed under the sovereignty of Italy."

*Occupation of Massawa.*—Steps were then taken to establish political and commercial relations with Abyssinia; and in 1883 commercial treaties were successfully negotiated with Menelik, King of Shoa, and other local chieftains. The occupation and annexation of Beilul and Massawa coincided with the Mahdist troubles in the Egyptian Sudan, and were regarded favourably by the British Government, though the Turkish Government made an energetic protest. Two military expeditions disembarked at Massawa in February and March 1885 and occupied the colony. In April of the same year, Massawa was made the headquarters of the African troops; and, in November, of the naval forces in the Red Sea. The political direction of the colony was placed under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unhappily, the torrid character of the strip of coast which the expeditions had to occupy soon caused discontent among the soldiers. This found an echo in Italy. The barren fever-stricken sandy wastes were regarded as typical of the whole colony; and its acquisition was held to have been a political mistake.



*Trouble with Abyssinia.*—In June 1884, by a treaty concluded at Adowa between the Negus John and the British Government on behalf of Egypt, Abyssinia acquired all the territories occupied by the Egyptian garrisons of Kassala, Amideb, and the Senahit, and those in the immediate neighbourhood of Massawa. On their part the Abyssinians pledged themselves to liberate the Egyptian garrisons besieged by the dervishes and to facilitate their passage to the coast. Unable, therefore, to advance beyond Massawa without meeting the Abyssinians, the Italians decided to occupy certain strategic points formerly held by the Egyptians, and by August 1885 had pushed their occupation as far as Saati, five leagues from the city. In October a treaty was negotiated with a local chief; and early in 1886 unsuccessful missions were sent to the Negus and to the Tigre chieftain, Ras Alula, in the hope of preventing hostilities. As a consequence of the disaster at Dogali (Jan. 1887), Italian prestige suffered; and Crispi decided on a military expedition to restore it. A large force of men and munitions was concentrated at Naples, and the exclusive direction of operations transferred to the War Office. Meanwhile the British Government intervened and despatched Sir Gerald Portal on a mission to the Negus John, who refused all mediation and declared himself ready for war. The King of Shoa, Menelik, however, gave hopes of a compromise. On November 8, 1887, General Asinari reached Massawa, disembarked his forces, reoccupied the abandoned positions, and, fortifying himself at Saati, connected that post with Massawa by a railway. The Negus John made a descent from the highlands with 80,000 men, and faced the Italians for a time, but on April 2, 1888, rapidly withdrew his army without attacking. In May the bulk of the Italian troops were sent home. General Baldissera remained with a small expeditionary force, and set himself to organise and train native troops.

*Dispute with France over right of taxation.*—On June 1 the Italian authorities laid a municipal

tax on all the householders in Massawa, both Italians and foreigners. Two French subjects and twenty Greeks under the protection of the French Consul refused to pay, and appealed to the Capitulations. The French Government stood by their consuls, and a long diplomatic dispute ensued. Crispi maintained that by the recall of the Egyptian forces Massawa had been exposed to anarchy, and that, for the general good, Italy, with the acquiescence of the friendly Powers, had stepped in to occupy and, if necessary, defend the city. Italy therefore exercised the rights of sovereignty. Moreover, no French consul had been seen in Massawa until eight months after the Italian occupation. On Crispi's appealing to the Powers, Lord Salisbury wrote (July 29, 1888), "Her Majesty's Government denies the validity of the Capitulations"; on August 3 the Austrian Government "considered the Capitulations inapplicable at Massawa"; and Germany "was ready to set the Capitulations aside so long as the Italians remained at Massawa." Thus fortified, Crispi closed the dispute and refused any further controversy with the French Government. On August 1 the Italian flag was hoisted at Zula; the spontaneous submission of local chiefs followed.

*Treaty of Ucciali with Menelik.*—Crispi now initiated a forward policy. As a result of the successful negotiations of Count Antonelli, Crispi furnished Menelik of Shoa with rifles and money, on the understanding that Menelik was to second Italian policy, and in 1889 concluded with him a Treaty of commerce and amity at Ucciali. According to Article XVII, Menelik, who on the Negus John's death early in the year had proclaimed himself King of Kings of Ethiopia, agreed to make use of the Government of the King of Italy in all his dealings with other Powers and Governments. During the anarchy that ensued in the highlands on the death of the Negus John, Crispi decided to occupy Asmara, an operation which was suc-

<sup>1</sup> Crispi, *Memoirs*, ii, pp. 318, 319.

cessfully carried out by General Baldissera on August 3; and on October 1 the Ucciali Treaty was supplemented by a convention signed at Naples, by which the King of Italy recognised Menelik as Emperor of Ethiopia and guaranteed him a loan of four million lire from the Bank of Italy.

*Dispute with Menelik.*—On January 1, 1890, the Italian possessions on the Red Sea were consolidated under the title of Eritrea. Successful operations against a band of dervishes at Agordat in June 1890 and the acceptance of the Italian protectorate by several local chieftains followed. Meanwhile Menelik, disputing the translation of the Treaty of Ucciali, maintained in a letter to the King of Italy that the sense of Article XVII was that he *might* make use of the Italian Government as an intermediary in his relations with other Powers, not that he *consented* to do so. Long negotiations came to no satisfactory issue; and on February 9, 1891, Count Antonelli and the official representatives of Italy left the Court of Menelik. During Rudinì's Premiership an agreement was concluded in March and April 1891 with Great Britain which defined the areas of the respective spheres of influence in East Africa. The Italian sphere potentially embraced most of Ethiopia, including Kaffa and Galla. Kassala and its district were designated as an additional territory which might be occupied by Italy until such time as the Egyptian Government was in a position to reoccupy it.

After the rupture with Menelik, agreements were made with the Tigre chieftain and rival of Menelik, Ras Alula; and in March 1891 an influential Royal Commission reported that, in their opinion, the colony was by degrees becoming financially self-supporting and might afford a field for Italian emigration. A new military governor, General Baratieri, won brilliant victories over the Mahdists, at Agordat (December 21, 1893) and Kassala (July 17, 1894). As a result, Italian prestige was enhanced, and a treaty with Ras Alula secured peace for a time.

*Italian defeat at Adowa.*—Meanwhile French and Russian emissaries had gained Menelik's ear; and in 1893 he denounced the Ucciali Treaty. Crispi made an unsuccessful attempt in March 1894 to restore friendly relations with Menelik. The Emperor, however, made common cause with Ras Alula, and the whole of Ethiopia was thus ranged against the Italians. The situation called for prompt measures, but the Italian Government did not take the necessary steps to meet it, and the ensuing campaign culminated in the disaster of Adowa (1896).

*Change from military to civil administration.*—The history of the colony after the reorganization by General Baldissera, and the recognition of the absolute sovereignty and independence of the Empire of Ethiopia, has been an uneventful one. In 1897 a final incursion of dervishes was successfully met at Agordat; and in 1898, after the Governor's residence had been moved to Asmara, the appointment of Signor Ferdinando Martini to be Governor of the colony marked the change from military to civil administration and inaugurated fresh advances in civilization.

*Delimitation of frontiers.*—Boundary questions became important. In December 1897 Kassala and its district were retroceded to Egypt; and a year later by the Martini—Parsons Agreement at Asmara and the Bongiovanni—Walter Agreement at Sabderat (June 1899), the Sudan boundary was amicably defined. A second boundary question in connection with the Italian protectorate of Raheita bordering the territory of French Somaliland was satisfactorily settled by the Visconti-Venosta—Barrère Agreements at Rome (January 1900 and July 1901). In May 1902 the Sultanate of Raheita was formally annexed to the colony, whose sea-board was thus extended from Ras Kasar to Ras Dumeira.

The delimitation of the Ethiopian frontier still remained for settlement. After Menelik's civil troubles had been dealt with, an agreement was reached at Addis Abbaba, in May 1902, by Menelik and the Italian and

British representatives, Major Ciccodicola and Colonel Harrington, and the boundary laid down between the colony of Eritrea, the Sudan, and Ethiopia. The frontiers having been subsequently marked out on the ground by the respective boundary commissioners, the agreement was finally approved in February 1907.

In July 1906 a commercial treaty was signed at Addis Abbaba which confirmed friendly relations with Menelik, and secured to Italian commerce the establishment of consuls or other representatives at all commercial centres in Ethiopia. By the Treaty of London (December 1906) Great Britain, France, and Italy agreed to maintain intact the sovereignty of Ethiopia and mutually to safeguard their rights and interests in the event of any changes in the Ethiopian Empire. The minor question of the Danakil frontier was solved by the Treaty of Addis Abbaba (May 1908).

*Attempts to colonize the highlands.*—Attempts to colonize the highlands of Eritrea date from the appointment in 1890 of Signor Leopoldo Franchetti, a member of the Chamber, as Colonial Counsellor for Agriculture and Commerce. A first attempt was made at Asmara in 1891; a second at Godofellassi, near Adi Ugri; a third at Gura. The holdings were small, from about 50 to 35 acres. The experiments were a failure; and the colonists, with few exceptions, returned to Italy after a brief stay. Experimental stations, however, established by Signor Franchetti, gave favourable results, and that of Asmara survived until 1900. From 1895 the colonizing movement was neglected until, in 1899, by the energy of a few colonists, two large farms were successfully established at Asmara; these were soon followed by others. In 1901 and 1902 a stimulus was given to agricultural development by Professor Gioli; and experiments in the cultivation of tobacco, cotton, and coffee gave good results. By 1902 concessions amounting to above 3,000 acres had been made to European and native farmers for cultivation on European lines, and by 1911 such concessions had reached nearly 28,000 acres. Attempts

to divert Italian emigration to the colony have, however, not been successful.

In conclusion, it should be said that Eritrea has provided Italy with fine and loyal troops in the Askari, who rendered conspicuous service in the Libyan war.

### III. SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS

#### (1) RELIGIOUS

AMONG the native populations of Eritrea Mohammedanism possesses a persistent force of expansion; in 1910 two-thirds of the inhabitants were described as belonging to that faith. Since the Italian occupation, some Abyssinian Mohammedans, who had been forced by the intolerance of the Negus to embrace the Coptic religion, have reverted to their former faith. In the highlands near the Abyssinian frontier—at Serae, Akkele, and Guzai—the majority of the population are Christian Copts (Monophysites); and a body of Catholic converts, numbering about 6,000, who were formerly under the French Lazarists (expelled in 1895), have been placed under the direction of the Apostolic Prefecture of Eritrea, which was created in September 1894. A small settlement of Swedish missionaries has control over about 500 Evangelical converts. A few tribes still retain a primitive animistic form of religion. On the whole, Italian authorities are agreed that Mohammedanism is making rapid progress in Eritrea.

#### (2) POLITICAL

The government of the Crown Colony of Eritrea was on May 6, 1908, reorganized as follows:—The Secretarial Department of the Governor-General; the Departments of Civil Affairs, Finance, Colonisation, Accountancy, Public Works, Law and Justice. Public

Administration was grouped under the following heads: sanitation; police, civil and military; local revenue offices, distinct from the Treasury and Postal services; customs and port dues at Massawa and Assab; posts and telegraphs; railways and roads, with a special section for railway construction; local office of works at Massawa; commercial agencies.

By royal decree (December 30, 1909) the Governor-General was empowered to contract a loan of 17,000,000 lire with the Bank of Italy for railway construction. A line from Massawa to Asmara has already been completed, and is being extended to Keren.

The residence of the Governor-General is at Asmara. The colony is sub-divided into eight commissariats, three of which—Keren, Massawa, and Assab—lie along the coast, and include the Dahlak archipelago, and have their seats at Keren, Massawa, and Assab respectively; while five others embrace the inland territories—Baraka with its seat at Agordat; Gash and Setit, with its seat at Barentu; Hamasen, at Asmara; Seræ, at Addi Ugri; Akkele and Guzai, at Saganeiti.

### (3) EDUCATIONAL

Marked impulse was given to education in the colony by the advent of General Baldissera in 1888. Existing elementary schools giving instruction in Italian and Arabic were added to and improved, but an attempt to teach the arts and music was only partially successful. In December 1894 evening and holiday schools were opened in Massawa, and as the highlands were brought under civil administration, elementary schools, mainly staffed by soldiers, were established at Keren and Asmara. As the transference of the seat of government to Asmara increased the population of employees and merchants and tradesmen, it became necessary to provide schools for Italian children. This was done in 1903. More recently the Arab and Italian schools at Massawa for the education of the children



of native merchants have been reorganized, and trade schools have been instituted at Keren. Private enterprise has furnished an evening school for drawing and design at Asmara. The whole educational administration of the colony is now centralized under the control of the Inspectorate of Schools abroad (*Ispettorato delle Scuole all'Estero*).

## IV. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

### (A) MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

#### (1) *Roads; Caravan Routes; Railways*

In 1913, 356 miles of carriage roads had been made and 125 more were projected. There is a public motor service from Asmara to Saganeiti, the first stage on the most important trade route to Abyssinia. Weekly diligences connect Asmara with Ginda on the railway, with Keren to the north, and with Addi Ugri and Addi Kaie to the south.

Three important caravan routes start from Massawa: one going *via* Lebka, Keren, and Agordat to Kassala; another by Mahid, Addi Kaie, and Senafe to Addigrat, Makalle, and Borumieda, one of the chief markets of Abyssinia; and the third by Ginda, Asmara, and Addi Ugri to Adowa, and on from there to Sokota or Gondar. Most of the trade with Abyssinia follows the route by Addi Kaie, which is the most important caravan market in the colony. A good road leads from Assab to Ela on the frontier, whence there is a caravan route to Borumieda.

The chief railway is that which connects Massawa with Asmara, the seat of government, and is being extended to Keren. From there it will be carried on to Agordat, the headquarters of the Società Nazionale per la Coltivazione del Cotone, and thence to the River Setit. The completed section, Massawa—Asmara, is 75 miles in length. The Asmara—Keren section, the first stage of which was opened for goods traffic in December 1914, will be  $62\frac{1}{2}$  miles long, and the section Keren—Agordat about 47 miles. The railway is owned and managed by the State, and its

accounts for 1916 show a profit on the year's working of £11,457. A law of April 1, 1915, authorized a loan of £880,000 from the State Treasury to be spent during the period 1915-1920 on the continuation of the railway and on other public works.

The port of Massawa is served by a system of Decauville railways, in addition to the main railway. From Mersa Fatima, on the coast, 76 miles south of Massawa, a Decauville line 46 miles long was constructed in 1917-18 as far as the frontier, in order to serve the Dalol potash mine, which lies within Abyssinian territory, 10 miles by road from the terminus.

### (2) *Communications by Sea*

Massawa, the best natural harbour on the Red Sea, was visited in 1915 by 203 steamers, of which 122 were Italian and 70 British. Before the late war the Marittima Italiana had arranged for monthly calls by the Genoa—Mombasa service and by the outward service of cargo-boats between Genoa and Bombay, a weekly service between Massawa and Suez, and a monthly Red Sea circular service calling at Assab, Hodeida, Jedda, Port Sudan, and Suakim. The port of Massawa was also used by upwards of 2,000 sailing boats.

### (3) *Telegraphic Communication*

About 1,080 miles of telegraph wires had been laid by 1912. Three of the lines were international—a submarine cable, Massawa—Assab—Perim, and two overland lines Asmara—Keren—Agordat—Sabderat—Kassala, and Asmara—Addi Ugri—Addi Kwala (Quala)—Adowa—Makalle—Dessie—Addis Abbaba. There is a wireless telegraph station at Massawa, which communicates direct with the high-power station at Coltano near Pisa on the one hand, and on the other with Mogadishu in Italian Somaliland. It was decided in 1912 to erect another wireless station at Assab.

## (B) INDUSTRY

### (1) *Labour*

Up till recently, at all events, there has been no deficiency of labour, either for agriculture or for the public works taken in hand by the Administration. Apart from the resources of the colony itself there has been a spontaneous immigration of Amhara, excellent and strong labourers, who can be employed on any ordinary work. Labour is also procured, especially for agriculture, from Yemen. As for the natives, Italian authorities report that they do well as miners, navvies, masons, carpenters, smiths, and so on. The Christian Copts show themselves better at agriculture than at other forms of labour, but they are also quick at learning handicrafts. The natives of the regions towards the Sudan are stronger and more powerful, but both classes are, generally speaking, intelligent, sober, and willing to work.

### (2) *Resources of Different Regions*

The coast lands are a barren desert of sand and stones, relieved only by an occasional grove of the *dum* palm, with here and there, as at the gorges of the Wakiro, a precarious attempt at cultivation. *Dura* and *bulduch* are grown in these oases and in the western plains; otherwise, the only important product of the coast lands is the salt found near Massawa, and in the depression in the interior of the Danakil country, which, however, is largely Abyssinian territory.

The eastern slopes of the tableland are malarious and almost uninhabited, and it is only in the highlands that agriculture is practised on a considerable scale. This region produces grain, beans and peas, and flax, and provides pasture for the cattle which constitute the chief wealth of the natives. It was estimated in 1912 that the colony contained 1,117,000 domestic

animals, worth £1,300,000 to £1,400,000. By a law of April 1915, Eritrean cattle and meat have been accorded preferential treatment by the Italian customs. Barley and *faf* were the grains chiefly grown by the natives, but a law of July 18, 1904, promulgated in order to stimulate the production of wheat, permitted the import of 2,000 tons of this grain into Italy free of duty. In 1913 the value of the wheat exported to Italy was over £12,000. Gold-bearing quartz reefs exist at Medrizien near Asmara, and at Seroa near Keren, but the metal is difficult of extraction, and the mines have not hitherto proved a commercial success.

The western slopes of the tableland and the western plain are scantily peopled by nomad tribes, whose only industry is cattle- and sheep-rearing, save at a few places in the valleys of the rivers Gash and Setit, where small quantities of cereals, beans, and tobacco are grown. It is in this region, however, that the cultivation of cotton has been undertaken by the Italians, and it may fairly be said that after many disappointments the Società Nazionale per la Coltivazione del Cotone has surmounted the difficulties of the experimental stage. Water has been obtained by bargaging the Giaghe, suitable varieties of cotton have been discovered, and ginning mills erected at Agordat and Massawa.

On the whole the resources of the country, so far as they have been exploited hitherto, can only be described as extremely scanty.

### (3) *Agriculture*

*Plant Products.*—The most useful or promising plant products are cotton, cereals (*dura*, wheat, and barley), beans and peas, dates, oil-seeds, coffee, tobacco, rubber and fibre; but the future of agriculture proper is dependent on so many conditions that it is difficult to predict the extent of its development.

*Stock-raising.*—Stock-raising is a well-established industry. The census of 1905 showed that the stock in

the country included over 295,000 cattle, 383,000 sheep, 352,000 goats, 46,000 camels, 22,000 donkeys, 6,000 mules, and 1,000 horses. In 1914 the number of cattle was estimated at 700,000. Cattle sickness periodically causes heavy mortality, but the Administration has taken steps to cope with it. Poultry and bees are kept in considerable numbers.

*Forestry.*—The forestry products are of a very limited range. The most useful are the *dum* palm (*Hyphæne nodularia* v. *thebaica*, v. *dancaliensis*), the sycamore (*Ficus sycomorus*), the Abyssinian juniper (*Juniperus procera*), the wild olive (*Olea chrysophya*), and the “silk plant” (*Calotropis procera*). The possibilities of systematic forest cultivation have not yet been fully explored.

#### (4) *Fisheries*

Fishing is carried on extensively, by natives, in the Red Sea; and the archipelago of Dahlak, opposite Massawa, is a centre of pearl and mother-of-pearl fisheries.

#### (5) *Minerals*

Mineral production is at present confined to the salt obtained from numerous salt pans near the coast and in the islands, and to the gold mined near Asmara and Keren. Auriferous quartz is known to occur also at Dase in the region of Gash-Setit, and at one or two other places. The other minerals which have been reported, though not hitherto in large quantities, include manganese and iron near Mount Gedem and elsewhere, asbestos at Arbaroba, and mica at Enda Sellasye.

#### (6) *Manufactures*

Native industries, such as tanning, basket-work, ironwork, pottery, and the like, are prosecuted on a scale sufficient only to satisfy local needs.

## (C) COMMERCE

(1) *Imports and Exports*

The only figures available are those for the trade of Massawa, but practically the whole of the sea-borne trade of the colony passes through this port. In 1913, the last normal year, the total value of the trade was £1,513,392, of which £579,422 was the value of exports, and £933,970 of imports. In 1915 the total was £1,972,796, of which £794,232 was assigned to exports, and £1,178,564 to imports. Transit trade was officially reckoned as over 15 per cent. of the total trade in 1913, and between 20 per cent. and 25 per cent. in 1915, but in reality it constituted a much larger proportion of the whole, since the products of the Sudan and Abyssinia are imported into the colony and sold there for re-export. No duties are payable on imports from Abyssinia.

About half the total trade in 1915 was with Italy, imports from which are exempt from the 8 per cent. *ad valorem* duty payable on goods from other countries. Italy is followed, in importance of trade, by Arabia, India, the Sudan, Aden, the United States, and Great Britain, in the order named.

The first place on the list of imports is taken by cotton fabrics, which form the clothing universally worn by the natives in the colony and in Abyssinia; these were valued at £318,700 in 1915, and 85 per cent. of them came from Italy. Next to cotton fabrics comes *dura* or Indian millet, which is the chief food of the natives, and is imported from India to supplement the insufficient production of the colony. The value of the *dura* import in 1915 was £109,436. This was followed by cotton yarn—grey, white, or coloured—which attained a value of £46,016, Italy contributing seven-eighths of the total. After these came iron and steel, wine, coffee, and sugar, in the order named.

Nearly half the aggregate value of exports is attributed to dried skins, which were valued at £369,660

in 1915, Italy receiving five-sixths of the total. Next in order of value are salt, sent almost exclusively to Calcutta, and valued at £51,688 in 1915; dried meat, which was valued in 1915 at £39,556, and all of which was consigned to Italy; palm nuts, mother-of-pearl, wax and pearls. There were no other exports worth more than £4,000 a year. Gum, cotton, oil-seeds and butter, which figured in the returns for 1913 and 1914, were absent in 1915; corn was exported in 1913 to the value of over £12,000, but none was shipped in either 1914 or 1915.

### (2) *Industrial and Commercial Firms*

Ten Italian firms sent exhibits to the Colonial Exhibition at Genoa in 1914, and five other firms of some importance held aloof, namely, those which hold concessions for the trade in mother-of-pearl (*Società Coloniale*); for the exploitation of the salt deposits near Massawa (*Società per le Saline Eritrie*); and of the gold mines (*Società per le Miniere d'Oro*); and those which are engaged in the cultivation of cotton (*Società per la Coltivazione del Cotone* and *Ditta Brini and Carpanetti*).

There are Arab merchant houses at Massawa; the retail and provision trades are largely in the hands of Greeks, and the distribution of cotton fabrics is chiefly carried on by the Indian merchants known as Banyans.

## (D) FINANCE

### (1) *Currency*

The coin in general use is the Maria Theresa dollar, which has a varying value averaging about 2s. Italian money with a special stamp is struck, and attempts have been made to displace the dollar, but without very much success, partly because it is extensively used in Abyssinia, both as a coin and a weight, and partly because the Eritrean dollar has only a token, not an intrinsic, value. In 1915 the export of Maria Theresa



dollars by sea was prohibited, and early in 1917 payment in dollars, except for foreign products, was prohibited.

### (2) *Banking*

A branch of the *Banca d'Italia* was established at Asmara in 1913, and in 1914 it was arranged that the service of the Treasury in Eritrea should be entrusted to the Bank, which was to open another branch in Massawa.

## (E) GENERAL REMARKS

The prospects of Eritrea should be considered from two points of view: first, the possibilities of developing the colony itself; and, second, its possibilities as an outlet for the Sudan and Abyssinia.

(a) The development of the colony has been slow, owing partly to the disaster of Adowa and partly to indecision as to the direction in which development should be attempted. It was at first thought that it could be made a white man's colony; but this idea has now been almost wholly given up, since the highlands, which are the only region where Europeans can settle permanently, are occupied by native agriculturists, whose eviction is not contemplated by the Government. For Italian colonization see above, pp. 17, 18.

The efforts of the Government, therefore, are now directed towards exploiting the country's resources by native labour, (under European supervision where necessary); and this attempt, on which much has been spent, has, on a modest scale, had considerable success. Several agricultural experimental stations have been started in the different climatic zones, and have shown the possibility of cultivating rubber and coffee in the lowlands, fruits and vegetables in the highlands. It is suggested that a trade in the two latter products might be established with the Sudan. But unquestionably the most promising of the agricultural products is cotton, and there seems little doubt that varieties of

American cotton can be grown on an extensive scale in the western plain. Hitherto the chief difficulty has been the lack of transport to the coast and of harbour facilities at Massawa. These are now being provided by the expenditure of the loan of £880,000 authorized by the law of April 1, 1915. The next essential is irrigation, and it is estimated that about 35,000 acres could be watered from the River Gash and a further 105,000 acres by reservoirs. Irrigation works were being constructed in 1915.

Lack of labour has not hitherto been a serious difficulty. Owing to the extension of European influence over the surrounding countries, war is ceasing to be a profitable industry in Abyssinia. The natives are therefore quite willing to emigrate temporarily to Eritrea, and the railway has for the most part been built by their labour. But unless capital is forthcoming there is no hope of any substantial development of the resources of Eritrea, and hitherto Italian investors have been very reluctant to sink capital in the colony, while the offers of foreign capitalists have been rejected.

(b) As an outlet for the Sudan and Abyssinia, Eritrea appears to have prospects more immediately hopeful. The railway to Agordat will make Massawa the most accessible port from Kassala. By its extension to the River Setit it will also tap the north-western portion of Abyssinia, which centres round Gondar, where there is an Italian agency. The north-eastern district, Tigre, already sends its products to Massawa by the caravan route Adowa—Addi Kaie. The southern, and richer, portion of Abyssinia will no doubt always send its products to Jibuti, to which Assab is unlikely ever to be a serious rival, though the trade of the latter has revived to some extent in recent years. But it is evident that the completion of the railway and the improvement of the port of Massawa will make that town a formidable competitor of Port Sudan.

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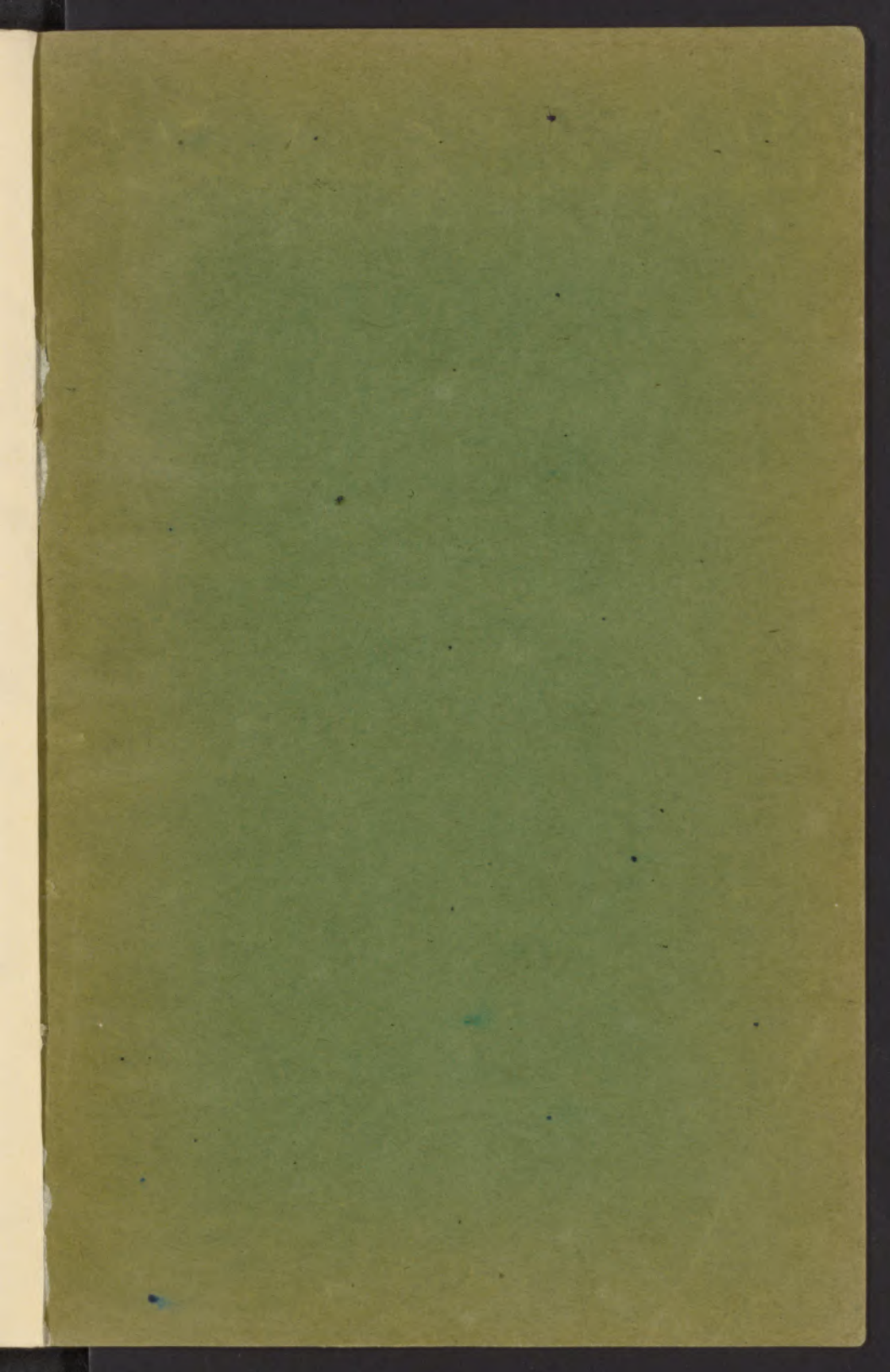
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## MAPS

Eritrea is partially covered by sheet 46 of the War Office map of Africa (G.S.G.S., 1539, old numbering), on the scale of 1:1,000,000; and the rest is shown on the International Map of Africa (G.S.G.S., 2465, new numbering), on the scale of 1:1,000,000.

A single-sheet map of Eritrea, on the scale of 1:3,000,000, has been issued by the Intelligence Division of the Naval Staff (Ordnance Survey, February 1919) in connexion with this series.



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