

The Dalles Daily Chronicle.

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THE DALLES OREGON

ABYSSINIAN MONKS.

Their Life Seems Enjoyable to an English Traveler.

They Retain Third Century Customs and Have Most Remarkable Beliefs—The Famous Monastery of Debra Bizen.

Abyssinia is a country of queer customs and a strangely interesting land. The people are, for the most part, dirty and immoral, inferior in many respects to the Kafirs of South Africa, but they are Christians, and have retained in its ancient simplicity the religion that was taught them in the third century.

Among Abyssinians the man who kills a lion is a popular hero, and is awarded the proud privilege of wearing about his head the name of the beast he has slaughtered, a privilege that is prized as highly as knighthood among Europeans, and makes its possessor a man of mark to the end of his life.

Some interesting, rare and exceedingly valuable relics they are possessed of, too, or think they are. Here is an account of a visit to the monastery of Bizen by J. Theodore Bent, who recently returned from Abyssinia.

"We started off at break of day to visit the monks. It took us three hours to reach the summit, where the monastery of Debra Bizen, or 'The Church of the Vision,' is placed, and truly the name has been well bestowed, for no more lovely vision could be imagined than the one which lay before us. We could easily see Massowah and the Red sea coast line, and the folds of rich blue mountains to the right and left of us as we stood on the pinnacle of the sacred mountain were glorious to behold.

"My wife and I reached the holy precincts unobserved. We were seeking out for ourselves a spot where we could repose, when down came the monks, mute with horror at a woman having approached so near. In vain we expostulated and pleaded fatigue, in vain we said we were English and determined to hold our ground. The monks sat around weeping and exclaiming, 'Better for us to die than to permit a woman to stay here.' Seeing their genuine distress, my wife permitted her objectionable and weary person to



MONASTERY OF DEBRA BIZEN.

be removed about a quarter of a mile away.

"The church is round and built of wood. It has inside two corridors around it where the vulgar may penetrate, but in the square holy of holies not even the king may enter. The mysterious relics kept by Abyssinians in these innermost recesses claim exceedingly bold origins. In one place they profess to have the original ark of the covenant, in another a bag full of wind blown by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. At Debra Bizen our interpreter told me that they kept the picture of the madonna which Monielek, the son of Solomon by the Queen of Sheba, brought back with him from Jerusalem.

"The life of a monk at Debra Bizen must be enjoyable enough. He wanders about all day long in his white flowing robe and yellow cap, enjoying air of the most perfect freshness. He has his little stone cell or wooden hut beneath the shadow of the rock. He has his refectory, where he meets his fellows twice a day at meal times—that is to say, when there is no fast on, and fasts in the Abyssinian calendar are many and rigorous. On festival days he is very busy chanting and dancing in the church. He never marries. He knows nothing of the world or its ills. His existence is a negative one—he does neither harm nor good to his fellow creatures."

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The rich grazing country along the eastern slope of the Cascades furnishes pasture for thousands of sheep, the wool from which finds market here.

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The salmon fisheries are the finest on the Columbia, yielding this year a revenue of thousands of dollars, which will be more than doubled in the near future.

The products of the beautiful Klickitat valley find market here, and the country south and east has this year filled the warehouses, and all available storage places to overflowing with their products.

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