



View of Village in Eritrea.

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

FEW spots on earth are so barren, so inhospitable, as Assab, in Eritrea, on the west coast of the Red sea. With only a few palm trees, some low houses and a well set between the glaring Red sea and a waterless waste beyond, it seems a hopeless place for white men to choose as home.

Yet here the Italian colony of Eritrea began its blistering existence. Neither treasures nor sheer adventure, however, had anything to do with its beginning. What is now Eritrea began in 1870, when the Italian Rubattino Steamship company needed a coaling station in the Red sea and bought the Bay of Assab and its miserable oasis from a petty local ruler, the sultan of Raheita.

Until then Assab was only a small harbor for the sambuks, or Arab sailing craft, trading on the Red sea. Even today it is little more.

Assab proved itself of slight use as a coaling depot; yet by its purchase the Rubattino company was launched into the business of buying land. By 1879 a small Italian military force had landed in Assab and hoisted the Italian flag in this corner of the world. Today, that red, white and green banner flies over a strip of Red sea coast which is 670 miles long. Inland from Assab across the desert rise the cool highlands of Ethiopia (Abyssinia).

Torrid, barren and fever-stricken is the coast that stretches northwest from Assab, but as you approach the port of Massaua the topography begins to change. Behind Massaua the green highlands rise in steep embankments, forming a sort of gateway to the interior of Africa.

It was when Italy occupied Massaua in 1885 that Eritrea took definite shape; now the area in Eritrea ruled by Italy stretches inland in some places 220 miles or more to the frontiers of Ethiopia and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

In brief, within 20 years after the Rubattino company bought Assab as a coaling station which was never developed, her colony here had come to cover nearly 46,000 square miles of Africa. On January 1, 1890, this new colony was christened Eritrea by the Italian government, in remembrance of the "Mare Erythraeum," as the old Romans called the waters of this part of the world.

Massaua a Hot Place to Work.

Massaua, one of the hottest cities in the world, with its environs, is the home of 15,000 natives and a few hundred Europeans. The white men, mostly Italians, work during the day in their offices under big fans, with glasses of cool water on their desks. In a damp and steamy air they toil with a mean temperature for July of 94 degrees Fahrenheit, 20 degrees hotter than the average for the hottest month in New York.

Service in the government and administration; routine work for shipping companies and banks; trade in products of the land; the importation of goods—all these go their routine way, uninterrupted by the murderous climate.

Only by constant work can the

white man stand the climate and forget the heat. No idle man could endure it here. Except for a few nurses in the hospital, no white women live in Massaua in summer. Then, the families of white employees go to the high plain of Hamasi, the real center of Eritrea.

The harbor of Massaua is the only place in Eritrea where large ships can tie up at docks to discharge their passengers and cargo. For this reason it was here that the landing of Italian troops and war materials took place.

Population Is Much Mixed.

The native population is a colorful mixture. Here you see some pure Ethiopian Hamites; also, always near the coast, many Semitic Arabs who invaded the land partly as conquerors, partly as traders, or as members of that uncertain class between the two. Where there are Arabs in the East there is usually the negro, too—from many parts of Africa. Arabs have been slave traders for centuries, especially along these coasts. In this district the sea route seems to have been the simplest; one finds here more Somali negroes than Sudanese.

Recently a new element has come—the Indian traders, common now in nearly all places on the east coast of Africa. It is they who, in the main, bring cheap Japanese wares into the retail trade of the country.

Arabs, on the other hand, carry most of the Red sea local traffic in their sambuks, or baby clippers, whose form has changed but little with passing centuries.

The Dahalach islands, facing Massaua, are the center of Arab pearl fisheries and mother-of-pearl dealers.

Behind the smooth surface of Massaua's harbor entrance stretches a broad lagoon, from which glaring sun draws a trembling vapor. Back of the lagoon rise the jagged outlines of what one at first takes to be white sand dunes, quivering in the heat like a mirage, ghostly in their detached existence. Everywhere the heat rests like a curse on all living creatures.

Yet, since man cannot escape this heat, he has put it to work. Here is one of the largest salt works on the Red sea coast. What one thinks are white sand dunes are really huge piles of white salt!

Salt Industry Flourishes.

In wide, flat basins connected by canals with the Red sea, salt water evaporates perhaps more quickly than anywhere else in the world. In the salt pans of Massaua, the African sun evaporates in a single day almost 2,000,000 gallons of water. To this terrific heat Massaua owes an important part of its income—from the export of salt.

From the evaporating pans native workers scrape the salt into cone-shaped piles. Thereby the last vestige of moisture is drained and the space is made immediately ready for the next water supply. The sun is an investment here and must not be allowed to shine unused. With pails and shovels, a troupe of half-naked natives throw themselves into the work. In an endless chain,

like the buckets on a big dredge, they go, one carrier behind another.

You see the piles of salt grow higher minute by minute, quickly becoming a pyramid about 15 feet high—a new addition in the row of many hundred similar salt pyramids. Here they stand, the property and investment of the Italian "Societa per le Saline Eritrie," and await the buyer. He comes, unexpectedly enough, from Japan!

Much of Japan's raw-salt needs are met by Eritrea. To get this African salt, Japan sends specially-built freight steamers to the Red sea.

The Climb to Asmara.

In summer, Massaua Italians speak of Asmara, the colony's capital city, as paradise.

The air route from Massaua to Asmara is barely 40 miles. The railroad and the highway are almost twice as long; they wind up to where Asmara stands nearly 8,000 feet higher than Massaua.

One climbs into the four-coach train which makes the one and only daily run to Asmara. At first the road lies over fairly even country, dotted with a few palms and low sycamores. Panic-stricken by the noise of the locomotive, a lonely, long-legged ostrich flees across the fields.

Slowly now the track begins to climb; and the temperature sinks. Mountain slopes become greener, and one can see fruit-bearing cactus, and a little later also the first euphorbia, typical plant of the Ethiopian highland.

Over this easy route men now travel at high speed. Four hundred years ago, a certain group moved over it slowly, painfully, in one of the strangest undertakings in the history of colonization. Here in the summer of 1541 Dom Christovao da Gama, "a strong hero, whose heart seemed to be made of iron and steel," together with 400 of his Portuguese warriors, marched under incredible hardships from Massaua to the high plateau. Neither adventure nor chance to loot drew them; their urge was to save Christianity in the world's oldest Christian kingdom.

At that time a powerful Moslem general, Mohammed Gran, "the left-handed," had decided to make Abyssinia a Moslem land. He had wiped out the Christian Ethiopian emperor's army, slaughtered the Christian population, and burned the churches. It was to check Mohammed Gran and to aid the Christian emperor that young Christovao da Gama, the fourth son of Vasco da Gama and brother of the governor of India at that time, came to Asmara. Though da Gama was captured and put to death and most of his faithful followers fell in battle, through their sacrifice a rare old culture was saved to the world.

Cordwainers Held Rank Among Makers of Shoes

Frequently referred to by dramatists and pamphleteers as "The Gentle Craft," the official designation of those who followed the trade of making and repairing shoes under the old guild organization, was that of cordwainers. This did not mean they worked with rope or cordage, says the American Collector, but with Cordovan leather, a distinct variety originally made at Cordova, Spain, tanned to softness like cloth and dyed in many colors.

The raw material was goat hide. By the middle of the Fourteenth century when making shoes had risen to the standing of guild brotherhood in England with a coat of arms duly recorded by the College of Heraldry, the goat, source of Cordovan leather, played an important part in the insignia. In the crest and on the shield, a goat's head was the chief motif.

In "The General Descriptions of All Trades," published 1747 in London by T. Waller, the Cordwainers company is listed as the twenty-seventh of the city companies. Here it is stated that "the business of shoe mending though too often ridiculed by the vulgar is very profitable and employs a great many hands and some do their work so cleverly as hardly to be discovered from new."

Through A WOMAN'S EYES

by JEAN NEWTON

ON WHAT PARENTS DO AND SAY BEFORE THEIR CHILDREN

"I WISH parents who have been disappointed in marriage would not make their children cynical."

That is the remark of a student at the New Jersey College for Women, where questionnaires were distributed to learn the attitude of the modern college girl toward marital problems.

"If we could only see ourselves as others see us," said the poet. And if parents could only for a moment see themselves as their children see them how valuable it would be!

That service is performed in some measure for all the parents who read this by the revelation of one daughter's viewpoint in answering her questionnaire. "I wish parents who have been disappointed in marriage would not make their children cynical!"

How little most parents realize, in their daily attitude towards each

other, in their remarks, serious and marriage in general, the impression they are making upon their children! And yet how little they realize that the effort and sacrifice on the part of parents to bring up their children with the right attitude toward life—that is the attitude that will be conducive to bringing them happiness—that all this effort is vitiated in a moment of thoughtless talk.

It is necessary for parents to realize that whatever they do in the presence of their children registers with those children. "What an order," you may say—"what a terrible responsibility." That is exactly what it is—a terrible responsibility—the most important of our lives, and worth all the trouble isn't it?

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Bedtime Story
By Thornton W. Burgess

THE RATS PLAN TO KILL BILLY MINK

IT HAVING been agreed by all the rats in the big barn that they would stand by one another, and the next time Billy Mink appeared would all attack him at once, they immediately began to feel better. Only the oldest ones shook their heads doubtfully and continued to look worried. The younger ones boasted. Had they not driven away the cat which the farmer had put in the barn to catch them? And was not the cat very much bigger than this new enemy? They began to talk among themselves of the



"I'm Not Afraid," Said One.

fun they would have when Billy Mink should next appear.

"I'm not afraid," said one. "Nor I," cried another. And all the rest of the young rats boasted in the same way.

But the gray, old leader still shook his head and looked worried. "It is all very well for you to brag of what you will do," said he, "but bragging never yet won a battle. If we would keep our homes here in this big barn where many of you have spent your lives, we must make our plans to kill this terrible enemy. It will not do to simply drive him away, for he might return when least expected. Always there must be two or three on watch. The instant that mink appears warning must be given, and then all of us fall on him at once.

"As I told you before, the best fighter among us would be helpless if he had to face that fellow alone, but if we all attack him together there will be nothing to fear."

So certain of the sharpest-eyed rats were appointed to watch all the holes through which Billy Mink might enter the big barn. When it

should become necessary for them to go hunt for food other rats were to take their places. All the scattered to their homes. Some lived under the barn, some on the main floor of the barn, and some lived in the hay loft. The rats were still worried by the younger ones were filled with excitement. They rather thought that Billy Mink would come. They wanted to show how they could be. Not a doubt entered into the mind of one of them that all would end as they had planned.

Meanwhile Billy Mink was comfortably dreaming in the little den he had chosen under the woodpile between the big barn and the henhouse. Billy's dreams were pleasant dreams. That is, they were pleasant dreams for him. He dreamed he was hunting rats. They were very pleasant dreams for Billy. But had any of the rats in the big barn had those dreams they would have been anything but pleasant. It is funny how in this world the things which are very pleasant for one are very unpleasant for another.

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Tailless Manx Cats Are Engima of Cat Kingdom

The engima of the cat kingdom is the Manx. Tailless and with disposition distinctly different from the long-haired Persian or the smooth-coated Tabby, they are viewed with curiosity, observed with interest, and written about by the writer in the Los Angeles Times. The pure Manx does not even have a stump. There is only a little pompon where the tail should be and there are other physical peculiarities that the first glance misses. Nature seems to have made up for the lack of a rudder by increasing the power in the hind legs. The body is shorter and stouter, and rising higher in the back, gives the effect of being out of balance. This is not true for although they have a peculiar gait, they are exceptionally quick on their feet. The coat is short and smooth, thicker and longer than other tailless haired varieties.

The Isle of Man is given as the native home and it is there they received their name. However, the breed of cats is not confined to the one location; visitors in Burma, China, Japan, and the Malay Peninsula report seeing them. Some tries report seeing them. Some only second cousins, having a little stump or a tightly curled tail, with odd kinks resembling a dog's tail.