

MENELEK, EMPEROR OF ABYSSINIA

Renowned as Soldier and Statesman & Why Consul General Skinner is to Visit the Ethiopian Monarch

ROBERT P. SKINNER of Massillon, O., who has been designated by the president to visit the empire of Abyssinia for the purpose of negotiating a commercial treaty with Emperor Menelek II, is at present consul general of the United States at Marseilles, France.

Sending a mission to Abyssinia is one of the state department's efforts to create and extend our trade. Our goods have filtered into Abyssinia for many years, almost without the knowledge of our own people. The empire has a population of 10,000,000 and a stable government, while a recently completed railroad connects it with the outer world.

We now supply Abyssinia with cotton sheeting, petroleum and other staples and are buying hides, carpets, wool, ivory and civet. Our relations are important and reciprocal, but not direct. Hitherto the trade route has been by sea from Aden to Zofia and thence by caravan to Herra. Within a few months a railroad has been finished from Djibouti, a new French town on the Red sea, to Herra, the commercial capital of Abyssinia.

Consul General Skinner will leave Marseilles on Oct. 25 on a war vessel designated by the navy department and proceed to the French port of Djibouti and thence by rail to Herra. From that point the consul general and his party will march overland to Adis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia, where the negotiations with Menelek will be conducted. It is regarded as certain that an intimation has been conveyed to the state department that Menelek will enter into a trade alliance with the United States.

Inasmuch as the proposed trip will necessitate a passage through a wild and sparsely settled country, a small guard of marines numbering sixteen men, commanded by a sergeant, will accompany the consul general. An application has been made to the French government to permit the armed American marines to cross the French territory between Djibouti and the borders of Abyssinia, and it will probably be granted.

Adis Ababa, the capital of Abyssinia, is about 300 miles in a straight line from Herra, but the expedition will



EMPEROR MENELEK OF ABYSSINIA.

have to travel a much greater distance because of the mountainous character of the country and the absence of direct roads. It will take from fifteen to twenty days to cover the distance.

Menelek II, "king of kings and conquering lion of Judah," is sixty-one years old. For fourteen years he has ruled Abyssinia, gradually amalgamating the four kingdoms of Shoa, Tigre, Amhara and Godjam into a solidified empire by the suppression of internal disturbances and by successfully resisting all aggression from without. Before assuming imperial authority in 1889 Menelek was prince of Shoa, which is said to be geographically identical with the ancient kingdom of Sheba. Indeed he traces his descent to an old time Menelek, son of Solomon and the celebrated queen of Sheba. This claim is supported by Abyssinian tradition, by the Koran and the folklore of the Arabs. Both Menelek and his subjects believe that he has inherited the wisdom of his great ancestor, and the belief is said to have had a remarkable effect on the emperor.

His sway affects a territory of 150,000 square miles, and the prevalent religion of the country is Christianity, though of a primitive and barbarous type. The faith was taken there in the fourth century and was planted firmly enough to withstand all subsequent assaults of the Mohammedans.

Though his setting of the antagonistic elements in his own empire must be reckoned as strong evidence of Menelek's ability as a ruler, the crowning feather in his cap was the defeat of Italy in open warfare. Trouble with the Italians began as far back as 1870, when Italy began extending its jurisdiction over the Red sea territory in the vicinity of Massawa. As time went on she asserted a protectorate over Abyssinia, which was never recognized by the Abyssinians. There were constant clashes, but in 1896 there came a real war.

By that time Menelek had formed and equipped an army of 100,000 men,

and he went to work to teach the invaders a lesson. Defeat after defeat of the most disastrous sort was inflicted on the Italians until the treaty of Adis Ababa was signed in 1896. In this war Menelek displayed generalship far superior to that of any of the officers pitted against him, and the result of the conflict has always been regarded as the deepest of disgraces by the Italian army.

Unlike most of his people, who are rarely of more than medium height, Menelek is nearly six feet tall, with a muscular and athletic frame, which he carries with much dignity. Captain S. M. Welby, the African explorer, says that while Menelek is by no means handsome he has a very taking and frank look. His features are large and massive, and there are intelligence and pride in his expression. He is an enlightened monarch, and the reforms and improvements in government in-



ROBERT P. SKINNER. (Uncle Sam's trade envoy to Abyssinia.)

augurated by him have done wonders in retrieving Abyssinia from its former state of scimitarbarism.

His habits are regular, and he is neither a gourmand nor a hard drinker, while his morals are said to be of a character that would not disgrace the highest civilization. Menelek is shrewd, farseeing and progressive and favors commercial relations with this country because he believes the United States is not seeking conquests.

Robert P. Skinner, the president's commissioner, is a native of Massillon, O., a newspaper man by profession and the owner of a prosperous paper in his native city. During the several campaigns of the late President McKinley Mr. Skinner accompanied him as a special correspondent and had the advantage of the president's personal friendship.

Shortly after his first election President McKinley appointed Mr. Skinner consul to Marseilles. Later, when the consulate at Marseilles was advanced in grade, President Roosevelt made him consul general.

The commercial and geographical situation of Marseilles made it a favorable point for the study of trade conditions in the Mediterranean, and among Mr. Skinner's earliest reports was one advising the opening of relations with Abyssinia. On Mr. Skinner's return from his mission to Africa he will resume his duties at Marseilles.

UNIQUE IN POLITICS.

Some of the queer ideas of Congressman Robert Baker.

Robert Baker, member of congress from the Sixth New York district, borough of Brooklyn, who recently caused a mild sensation by sending back to a railroad company a complimentary annual pass, is a unique character in politics and promise to be one of the most picturesque members of the Fifty-ninth congress.

He declined to appoint a cadet to the Annapolis naval academy on the ground that he did not believe that



CONGRESSMAN ROBERT BAKER.

war was ever justified, and therefore naval and military cadets were useless.

Congressman Baker, who has not yet taken his seat in congress, is an Englishman by birth, a fluent talker and a forceful debater. He was elected on the regular Democratic ticket, but had the support of the Single Taxers, of whose theories he is a warm advocate. He is a poor man and takes pride in telling that he is worth nothing. In appearance he is small and spare, and although he is but forty-one years of age, his hair is almost white.

PLAYING WAR GAME.

MAGNITUDE OF THE COMING ARMY MANEUVERS AT FORT RILEY.

More Than Eleven Thousand Men, Regulars and Militia, to Participate—Organization of the Troops. Major General John C. Bates.

Major General John C. Bates, U. S. A., who will be the ranking officer in the coming series of army maneuvers at Fort Riley, Kansas, Oct. 15 to 27, in which more than 11,000 men will participate, is a veteran of many campaigns, having fought in the civil war in Cuba and the Philippines.

Besides the large force of regular regiments from the national guard of Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Colorado will take part in the maneuvers, making the largest body of troops assembled for a similar purpose in recent years.

Fort Riley, which is to be the scene of the maneuvers, is located on the Kansas and Republican rivers, about three and a half miles from Junction City, Geary county, Kan., on the line of the Union Pacific railroad, and contains about 20,000 acres. As a result of last year's maneuvers it was found that for the handling of large bodies of troops in the working out of tactical problems the present reservation, large as it is, was entirely inadequate.

In order to secure additional lands the military authorities have for the past year been negotiating with the landowners in the vicinity of Fort Riley with a view of increasing the maneuver territory by the temporary use of desirable tracts adjoining the reservation.

The war department has succeeded in obtaining the written consent of 140 owners, whose aggregate holdings amount to about seventy square miles, or 44,230 acres, by which they have agreed to permit the military authorities to enter upon and occupy their holdings whenever it may become necessary to do so in the prosecution of the maneuvers this year at a nominal rental of 5 cents per acre.

By this means the war department has secured a section of country which affords every kind and variety of formation that could be desired in practicing field operations by troops, consisting of plain, high rolling country, streams, railroads, woods, ditches, ravines, etc. The section lines and farm roads are exactly such as would have to be utilized in actual warfare in a like country, and the houses, separately or clustered in small villages, form an important part in playing the war game.

As a part of the work attending the maneuvers at Fort Riley the greater



MAJOR GENERAL JOHN C. BATES.

portion of the regular army organizations will reach the scene by marching a part of the way and by rail the other part both going and returning.

The militia will be transported by the United States by rail or water from the home stations of their companies to the place of maneuver and return and will be paid and supplied rations from the date of their departure to date of return to their home stations.

The troops participating in the maneuvers are to be organized into five brigades, an artillery division and a provisional division, under command of Major General Bates. The four brigades of infantry will be commanded respectively by Brigadier Generals Frederick D. Grant, J. Franklin Bell and Thomas H. Barry of the United States army and Brigadier General J. W. F. Hughes of the Kansas national guard. Brigadier General C. C. Carr, U. S. A., will be in charge of the cavalry brigade, and Major W. H. Coffin, United States artillery corps, will lead the artillery division.

Major General John C. Bates, the ranking officer of the maneuvers, is a native of Missouri and a son of the late Edward Bates, who served in Lincoln's first cabinet as attorney general. In May, 1861, when but nineteen years old, he was commissioned first lieutenant in the Eleventh United States infantry and served with the Army of the Potomac until 1863. He was with his company at Gaines Mill, Malvern, the second Bull Run, Antietam and Fredericksburg and was twice brevetted for meritorious services in the field.

At the outbreak of the Spanish war he was made a brigadier general of volunteers and was promoted to major general for distinguished services during the Santiago campaign. In 1890 he was sent to the Philippines and came into prominence through his treaty with the sultan of Sulu. General Bates reached the grade of brigadier general in the regular service in 1891 and was made major general last year. He is regarded as an officer of great ability.

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