

GEOGRAPHY

Abyssinia, Eyed By Italy, Reputed Source of Sheba Gold

MAYBE the Queen of Sheba got her wealth of jewels and gold from Abyssinia, scene of present Italian conflict. And then again, maybe the Queen of Sheba didn't. The source of her fabulous riches is one of those historic mysteries, yet unsolved.

But practical Italy, eyeing Abyssinia as if it were a particularly agreeable prize package, can see in plain sight "treasures" perhaps more to be desired than gold.

Oil deposits of valuable commercial quantity, for instance, were recently reported discovered in this East African empire. Italy, with no oil fields in her own European boot, might well take interest in that report. The gasoline that makes Italian automobiles go is imported stuff, and so is the fuel oil under the boilers of Italian cruisers and fast ocean liners.

Abyssinia has an old trade in characteristic African wealth—ivory, skins, coffee and beeswax. The land has its silver and gold mines, too, even though these un-mysterious mines do not spill out shining metal on a royal, Queen-of-Sheba scale.

Fertility of Abyssinian soil is another asset, and one of the best when the land is judged by appraising foreign eyes. A variety of crops flourish in the lowland part of this country which is, in reality, the source of Egypt's agricultural wealth. From this region, east of Egypt, tributary streams have for centuries carried back to the Nile a rich sediment of earth. Italy, on the alert to find promising land for her growing

population, recognizes Abyssinia as a better bread-basket colony country than the nearby colonies in Africa which now fly the Italian flag.

Abyssinia—or Ethiopia, as the Empire prefers to be known, adopting the ancient name for that part of Northeast Africa—has maintained its proud Empire estate even though its borders touch those of colonial states, of France, Italy, Britain. Its 10,000,000 people are mainly a hybrid, Hamito-Semitic group, noted for their lively readiness alike to play and fight.

Science News Letter, February 23, 1935

METEOROLOGY

Air Mass Migrating At Time of Macon Disaster

By **DR. IRVING P. KRICK**, Meteorologist, California Institute of Technology.

A MASS of old polar air which was assuming tropical characteristics was lying off the California coast and on the day of the Macon disaster was being brought towards the coast by the formation of a disturbance over the Gulf of California.

This air was characterized by low cloudiness, with occasional mist and rather poor visibilities, but was not unstable and therefore not characterized by large vertical accelerations.

At the point where the Macon disaster occurred the air was moving south-southeastward toward the Gulf of California with velocities running around thirty miles per hour. There was probably some gustiness associated with the

movement, but not anything of an unusual nature.

The weather was not severe; in fact, only slight precipitation of a misting character was reported in the vicinity of the accident, thus excluding the possibility of any great instability within the air. No squall lines or air-mass boundaries were in the vicinity of the accident at the time. Therefore the possibility of the ship's encountering the tremendous vertical acceleration found along certain airmass boundaries is unlikely.

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METEOROLOGY

Weather Not Like That In Akron Disaster

U. S. Weather Bureau scientists stated that the weather conditions surrounding the wreck of the Macon on Feb. 12 were basically different from those that caused the Shenandoah and Akron disasters. The latter two ships perished in "line squalls"—sudden, violent shifts in wind direction that go with rapidly changing air pressures. Atmospheric pressures off the southern California coast were quite steady throughout Tuesday, and there was no shift in wind direction.

Airship authorities discount the reports that an explosion was the primary cause of the disaster. The Macon, like all American airships, was filled with non-inflammable helium.

Contrasting with the three major airship disasters of the U. S. Navy, airship engineers point to the extremely successful airship operation by the Germans. The Graf Zeppelin has circled the world and made many transatlantic crossings, avoiding dangerous storms in many instances by skilful navigation.

Those who checked the designs of the Macon give assurance that this American-built ship was superior in strength to the German airships.

While the program for more airships is expected to meet stiff headwinds in Congress, proponents remind that the operating personnel, not the construction or design of the ships themselves, have been held to blame for the previous disasters. The latest report to uphold airships is that of the Federal Aviation Commission issued last month.

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Fifty-five per cent. of a steer's weight is converted into meat; the rest is wasted unless made into by-products.

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