Shall the Newer Nights read?—"In the days of the Emperor, George the Fifth, came the British and Indians who brought us peace and water and all blessings."

MESOPOTAMIA

City of Five Roads, the German Railway, Arabian Nights and the Life-giving River

Gateway to Middle East. An Opportunity for India

BAGDAD

"In the days of the Caliph Harun al-Raschid—blessed be his memory—there lived in the City of Bagdad. . . ." So runs the commonest beginning to the stories in "The Arabian Nights."

German Star Wanes in Arabia Foes of Anglo-Indian Troops

Climate of Bagdad Region a Promise of Fertility But Deadly to Armies—Arabs of Desert Are Treacherous Nomads—Seafaring Arabs Know Germany is Beaten—The Gulf is Safe.

The campaigns in Mesopotamia differ beyond all words from every other operation that has taken place or is likely to take place in the world's war. It may be called the Cinderella of Campaigns, writes one officer, for indeed, if past history and modern engineers tell a tale to be believed, the swamps and wastes of Irak will be changed within the life of the present generation into something as different from themselves as were the mice and pumpkin of the fairy story. But tremendous indeed are the difficulties of this campaign of transformation. The lamp of Aladdin must be rubbed very hard in this land on the borders of Aladdin's land of Arabia.

The difficulties of the British are of the country and the population. Treachery and fanaticism, heat and thirst constantly confront. The approach to south Mesopotamia lies through the Persian Gulf, and the gulf itself is a part of the campaigning. The lawless and ignorant tribesmen of Persia are being urged and organized to plunder Bushire, Bander Abbas and Jask by the erstwhile commercial travellers and Consuls of Germany. Since the war began the half-witted Persian fanatic has been deliberately encouraged to assassinate British and Russian consular officials in the provincial capitals of the Persian border land. To meet and check this policy of carrying the war farther towards India Great Britain must needs detach small bodies of troops and maintain them at Charbar, Jask, Bushire and other coast towns. Inland the tribesmen roam in anarchy until the final British triumph and their leaders are German.

Sea Power Impressive

On the southern side of the gulf at Muscat and Bahrein in Arabia again, isolated groups of British officers and Indian soldiers have had to be left to hold in check the forces of disorder and violence which, characteristically enough, the Hun chooses to provoke everywhere. But on the Arabian strand the star of Germany has waned. The Arab sailor folk know that on the sea "Alleman" are no more. These Arabs who cruise as far as Zanzibar in Africa and find their way to Malabar across the open sea without sextant or master's certificate, have long known that the flag of Germany cannot be shown upon the waters of the earth so long as the war lasts. The word has gone abroad—such are the ramifications of invincible Sea Power—that he who would trade abroad from the Arab coasts must be the friend of the Inglis.

From the gulf a winding river, which is restless in its bed, capricious in its fall, uncertain in its rise, and sown with shifting shoals and sands, is the sole communication between Bagdad and the sea; it is the inevitable line of supply, advance or retreat, for Turko-Germans or Anglo-Indians. Were Bagdad, with its storied history and its 145,000 people, the sole goal the ascent would not be worth the march and voyage. The campaign is worse because on either hand from the river stretches limitless plain. Its swamps are of unknown shape with bays and inlets, while at right angles to the river banks run dried canals and ancient irrigation ditches and cuttings with hard ridges on either hand. A hard country for campaigning in when you are a stranger—even at the best.

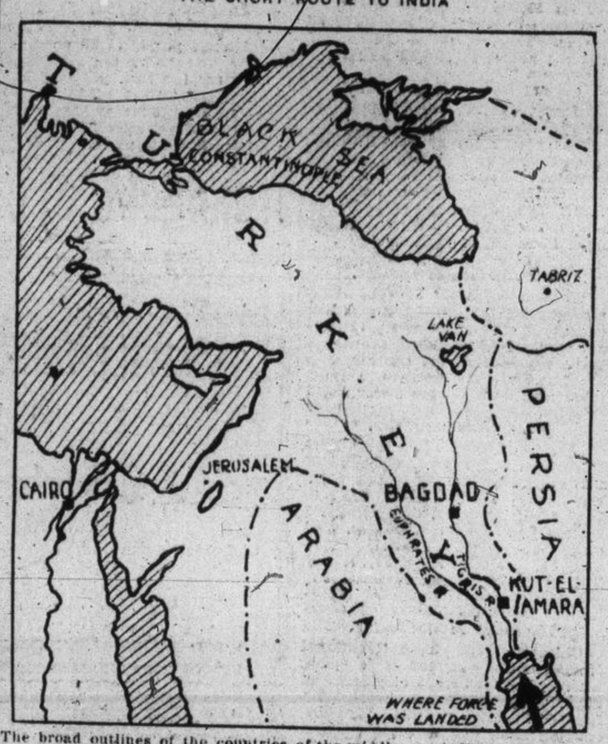
Climate an Obstacle

But the climate. It has the strongest possible contrasts. The English regiments have had to face a heat of 133 degrees Fahrenheit. In the steppe country, in the lower reaches of the river valleys near the Persian Gulf there are frequent visits from sandstorms that blow in from the West Arabian desert, bringing with them a heat that often reaches 122 degrees Fahrenheit, plus the blinding, choking sand. In winter warm currents from the Persian Gulf meet the chill currents from the snow-covered mountains of Armenia and enough moisture results to cover even the steppes with green herbage. In mid-winter the warm air from the gulf being drawn up the valleys makes at Mosul a "warm mildness." In spring the grass on the rolling plains is soon parched. So when the sandstorms blow in the scorching heat is carried up past Bagdad to the foot of the mountains of Armenia. Then in the higher portions of the Mesopotamian plain snow and ice are not infrequent and the thermometer falls as low as 14 degrees Fahrenheit. Damp heat, dry heat, the most extreme heat, a damp mildness, a freezng cold—truly one of the most trying climates in the world.

This difficult climate has great military and agricultural significance. The native of India stands this climate better than the natives, for he is of hardier stock and it is almost like home. The Indian regiments suffer less than the British regiments. The same will hold true of the Indian settler. It is far from being a white man's country. Why should not the industrious Indian, backed up by the scientific British administrator, hold the land that his sword will win? The present population is inadequate, totally so, in numbers and bankrupt in intelligence, industry and trustworthiness. Mesopotamia once supported a teeming population and boasted great cities. With security for life and property, with an irrigation system she will yet do so again.

British officers report that the present population of the land is base, semi-nomadic Arab, cruel, treacherous, and rascally as town influence can make it, yet predatory with primitive Bedouin instinct. To these people, Turkish corruption, German smugglers and the long war have brought a wealth of arms and munitions. Without any cohesion or policy they are neither for British nor Turk; on the day of battle they haunt the outskirts of the fight, plunder the wounded and stragglers impartially, harass the retreat of the defeated side, hoist white flags over their tents, and make protestations of unswerving loyalty to whoever seems to be in the ascendant.

THE SHORT ROUTE TO INDIA



The broad outlines of the countries of the middle east indicate the strategic importance of the Bagdad route to India via the Persian Gulf. Lying between Asia Minor, Arabia, Egypt, Armenia and Persia, the Bagdad country with its great river valleys is seen as the heart of the middle east and the focus of its problems.

MESOPOTAMIAN STORY GOES BACK TO EDEN

Tamerlane, the Mongols, the Caliphs and Nebuchadrezzar Among the Conquerors—Turk Completed Ruin

From its very position the history of Mesopotamia has been long, complicated and exciting. The first ruler was either Adam or Eve. From their time during a period of uncertain length little is known until the Babylonian King Lugalzaggisi, who lived before 2500 B.C., and claimed to have led hosts to the Mediterranean. Then came Sargon of Babylonia who, according to the records he left, brought civilization to this home of the world's civilization and introduced the idea of planting there colonies from other less-favored portions of his domains—a practice in which the Ten Lost Tribes and the Jews were later to play a part. Upper Mesopotamia and Babylonia or lower Mesopotamia were first joined by King Hammurabi about 2250 B.C., one of the first big unions of kingdoms. Hammurabi has left in cuneiform characters on stone bricks a remarkable code of laws, but real knowledge of this wonderful early period awaits the digging up of the mounds.

Jews and Romans

Down to the middle of the fourteenth century before Christ the land was held by many dynasties of native Assyrian or Mesopotamian families. The Babylonians were followed by the great Assyrian Empire of Tiglath-Pileser First and his dynasty which harassed Palestine, Syria and Persia and threatened Egypt. Tiglath-Pileser Fourth in the seventh century before Christ introduced the Israelitish colonists, but his effete successors fell before the hardy and wild Medes and Persians. They in turn lost to Alexander and his successors the Seleucidæ who had their capital at Antioch and introduced Greek ways and built many cities. Once again a menace came out of the east and by 130 B.C., and right on through later Greek and Roman times the Parthian Empire threatened the valleys. Sulla and the emperors from Trajan won and held a precarious grip to the borders of Persia and Christianity was introduced.

Islam Ousted Christianity

The new danger came from across the Arabian sands. Whereas the wild Arabs and the Ptolemies of Egypt had always failed to get more than booty and a temporary hold the organized and fanatical Arabs under the Caliphs, the successors of Mahomet, set up at Bagdad a Caliphate empire which was to last with more or less interruption from the East until the Turk. The Caliphs stepped in in 636 A.D., while Heraclius, the Eastern Roman Emperor who ruled from Constantinople, was disputing the provinces with Chosroes Second of Persia. Henceforth Islam replaced Christianity. At the Nicene Council there had attended bishops from Nisibis, Rhesæna, Macedonopolis and Persia, but only a few strange sects survived of all this Eastern Christianity, and Mesopotamia awaits the European and North American missionary. In 1185 the Caliphate fell to Saladin of Egypt and then the Mongols in the 13th century gave Western Asia a shock from which its civilization has never recovered although the Mamelukes of Egypt finally turned them out. Timur the Great or Tamerlane ravaged the river country from the east in 1393 and 1394. By 1516 the Ottoman Turk who already held Constantinople had established himself throughout Mesopotamia and the city of One Thousand and One Nights was the capital of a Turkish province.

BAGDAD RAILWAY AS LINE OF OUR ADVANCE

It would be only the irony of fate if the Bagdad Railway pointing toward India became the great line of British advance through the heart of the Turkish Empire on Constantinople. The route via Bagdad may seem the longest way around to the gates of Stamboul and the Golden Horn. A British advance from this direction may seem like starting to chop the snake to pieces by commencing at its tail instead of cutting off its head. But the fact is that with the Ottoman Empire traversed from the east that empire would be paralyzed and dying long before the capital would be reached. It would have cut off the capital and its defenders from the sources of their man power. The Turk recruits in this war do not come from European Turkey. That once proud empire has practically been out of existence since the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. From Anatolia—Turkey in Asia—come the hardy men who have so long held Gallipoli. From Asia Minor, Northern Syria, and even from Palestine and parts of Arabia they pass across the straits of Marmora into Europe. An advance from Bagdad to Damascus by a British force would stop this flow of men and the accompanying flow of foodstuffs towards Constantinople. The British conquerors in coming out of the east would only follow in the very roads taken by countless hosts and would have the advantage of the railway routes so carefully surveyed by the Germans since they fell heir to Napoleon's madnesses.

The most westerly point of Mesopotamia, fronting the Syrian desert, is the prehistoric Ur of the Chaldees.

PEOPLE AND COUNTRY NEED BRITISH GUIDES

The administrators of British India will find a wonderful opportunity in Mesopotamia. They will find a territory of vast extent, bounded on the southwest and west by the Arabian desert, on the north by Armenia, and reaching eastward to Persia. They will find two of the world's greatest rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, with their great tributaries and their hundreds of streams. The river banks will be seen dotted with hundreds of villages. Von Oppenheim, the German pioneer, counted three hundred flourishing villages in two days' march west of Edessa and Harran. In the three leading cities of Bagdad, with its 145,000 souls, Mosul with 61,000, and Urfa with 55,000 are natural centres of trade and manufacture already flourishing. At Urfa, Mardin and Mosul there are the seats of strong Christian missions under European control.

The towns which have survived four thousand years of war and plunder are on the rivers. Back from the rivers is the country of the nomads. Sixty tribes of one or two thousand tents each and a total population of about 200,000 now roam the plains. Each has a recognized camping ground for summer and another farther south for the winter. Most are Arab and Mohammedan. Some are Christian of strange unheard of sects that have survived since the fourth century. Some are not Arab, but Turkoman or Kurd. These and their land will be chief problems of the new regime which Britain seeks to establish. The condition of these people and of their country represents the great tragedy of the country, the fact that it has been continually the prey of foreign powers and never for long the seat of a strong native rule.

PERSIAN OIL FIELDS

Bagdad Army Battled For Pipe Line For Dreadnoughts

An important, but none the less incidental purpose of the British expeditions up the rivers of Mesopotamia from the Persian Gulf is the protection of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's pipe lines into the Persian oil fields from Samyeh below Ahwaz. Britain is virile enough to defend by attacking. Thus any raids by the Turks from their base at Bagdad are forestalled. The importance of the fields and pipes is that they are a source of supply for Britain's oil burning Royal navy while the ships operate in the Indian Ocean, Suez canal or Eastern Mediterranean. The British Government invested $11,000,000 in the enterprise with the sole object of ensuring a wide radius of activity for its battleships despite any temporary hold-up of oil supplies from other parts of the world. The pipe line is very wisely located. It runs south of the Karun river which runs eastward into Persia. Thus it has a river line between it and any hostile raids from the direction of Bagdad. It comes out to the Tigris delta on the east side of the river and thus the wide delta lies between it and attack from Turkish Mesopotamia. The rivers as far north as the mouth of the Karun are consequently certain to be red on the world's maps as long as Britain has the power to hold them. For the sake of the pipe line alone she must hold the mouths of the great rivers and their delta.

Vast Deserts Shrink

The Mesopotamian desert gives the illusion of contraction. Distances seem small until armies attempt to march across. Then the lack of water quickly proves the reality and heat adds the illusion of vastness and mirages delude the marchers. The difficulties of campaigning are not to be despised.

Harun-al-Raschid enjoyed friendly relations with Charlemagne and this is taken by the Kaiser as justifying German intrigue in modern Mesopotamia.

India's Hope: Turkey's Peril The Significance of Bagdad

Bagdad and Mesopotamia are the heart of the Middle East problem. They are the key to India and the back door to Constantinople and Europe. Fighting to possess them the Anglo-Indian armies attempt to furnish an intra-imperial outlet for Indian enthusiasm and ambition and to threaten the Ottoman strength at its source. The city of the Arabian Nights enters into the strategical calculations of the War Office equally with the city of the Hohenzollern or of Constantine. "On to Berlin" is not in reality as significant a rallying cry as "On to Bagdad." Berlin and its rulers are a new and a temporary problem by comparison with the problem of the great twin rivers, the alluvial flats, the unirrigated and barren plains, the ruins of a thousand storied cities, the fortress capital, the caravan routes, the shifting and shiftless tribes, the tempestuous but glorious past, the poverty-stricken present and the illimitable future of the Mesopotamian country. Reaching back to the dawn of history and teeming with possibilities for the future, the story of Mesopotamia has its fascinating and thrilling chapters and, while its present is bound up with the struggles of the British Empire, that story is worth the telling.

But wherein is the timeliness of the story of Bagdad and its country? The timeliness is that of the British expeditions which with the opening of the great war landed at the mouths of the Tigris and Euphrates and have ever since fought so persistently to get and maintain a hold on the hinterland of the Persian Gulf. The secret is hidden in the statement that the present is in no accurate sense an European War. It is the war of the British and Indian Empires for a single grand object which however must be sought in many diverse ways in many parts of the world. Because Britain could not now in honor retire from India the route to India must be defended and recent German activities in the direction of the Persian Gulf have constituted an enormous menace to the security of Britain's access to India and of the Indian Empire itself. Because the poor millions of India need opportunity for material advancement, because the soldiers of the Indian army deserve land, because a positive outlet for India's loyalty in the face of German machinations was desirable the conquest and occupation and development of the Mesopotamian valley presents itself as one very reasonable and inevitable result of a state of war with the German and Turkish Empires.

The drawing power of Mesopotamia is now as always in its strategic position and in its land. Since the time of the Moguls its civilization has been negligible. Since the time of the Osmanli Turk its material prosperity has been a declining factor and its population worthless in character. But its soil and rivers hide untold possibilities. The Germans planned to make the Mesopotamian valley, the "valley between the rivers," once again by irrigation one of the world's greatest granaries of wheat. They calculated on replacing American, Indian and Egyptian with Mesopotamian cotton. Why cannot the Indian Government and people do as much or more? Is the question answered emphatically by the Anglo-Indian expedition.

THE GREAT TWIN RIVERS

As channels of communication the Tigris and Euphrates, already valuable despite their natural defects, invite the European and the Indian. The two great rivers have cut for themselves great deep channels and cannot shift their courses far. The roads which parallel can never furnish a substitute for these natural highways when dredging and dock-making are completed by British skill and Indian toil. With these rivers a railway is also a secondary consideration. From the standpoint of Britain and India the Bagdad Railway is not a dream but a nightmare. It is not a colonization so much as a strategic railway. And for Britain it is not strategic at all. Mesopotamia's natural outlet is down the rivers to the Persian Gulf which looks to India and is under the control of the world's greatest sea power. There is no natural relationship with Constantinople, except perhaps the religious one. The products of the valleys can reach Europe more quickly and cheaply through the Gulf and the Suez canal than overland to Constantinople or any eastern Mediterranean port. Sea haul beats land haul decisively in this instance.

Willcocks the Recreator

In 1911-13 Sir William Willcocks, fresh from his conquest of the Nile by the Assuan Dam, surveyed Mesopotamia for the Turkish Government and reported that with modern irrigation installed at comparatively small expense the desert between the rivers could be restored to its ancient productivity and luxuriance.

Always in an Empire

Mesopotamia has formed part of the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, Syrian, Parthian, Roman, Caliphate and Turkish Empires. Until the last-named it flourished by means of a rude system of irrigation. Shall the British or Turko-German Empire be the next ruler?

Bagdad Distances

Bagdad is nearly 1,000 miles southeast from Constantinople, 600 miles east from the Suez canal, 300 miles northwest from the Persian Gulf, and 360 miles southwest from the Caspian Sea. Following the route of the Tigris it is 550 miles from the river mouth.

Bagdad was founded by the Caliph Abou Giafar al Monsur about 762 A.D.

Strengthening Britain in the Middle and Far East

Meaning of the Bagdad Railway's Route—The Back Door to Constantinople—Bagdad Itself Controls the Hinterland and Persia.

In rebuilding Bagdad and developing Mesopotamia British administrators would not need to change very much the projected line of the German Bagdad railway. From Koweit at the head of the Gulf the projected line runs to Basra and thence follows the Euphrates northwestward from its junction with the Tigris. Past the sites of ancient Babylon and modern Kerbela the Euphrates is followed until opposite Bagdad which is situated on the Tigris thirty miles away from the sister river. Bagdad is four hundred miles from the southeastern terminus of the line. At Bagdad the line is within reach of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, ruined cities of the times of Greek occupation after Alexander. From Bagdad northward the valley of the Tigris is followed until the city of Mosul is reached three hundred miles further on. On the way to Mosul the ruins of ancient Arbela, the city where Alexander broke the power of the Persians, are among the ruins passed.

Beyond Mosul Mesopotamia proper is left behind and the line running generally westward skirts the foothills of the Armenian ranges past Van and Diarbekir and other cities made famous by massacres. At Urfa or Edessa the valley of the upper Euphrates is reached again five hundred miles above Bagdad. From Edessa the line runs direct to the northeast corner of the Mediterranean near Issus, Adana and Antioch. Thence the route is through the interior of Asia Minor where Britain has no particular concern, except when fighting the Turk. Through Palestine from the borders of the Sinai desert runs another line through Damascus and projected toward Aleppo to connect with the Bagdad line west of Edessa. In Asia Minor there are other lines running to the Aegean coast and destined to great commercial importance when Italy and Greece or some other progressive powers gain increased influence there. The main line runs across the Ismid peninsula to Scutari and Constantinople and thence through Adrianople, Sofia, Nish, and Belgrade to Vienna and Berlin. So that British civil servants may yet go to Egypt and Mesopotamia and India by an all-rail route after the designs of the Kaiser who planned to make an Empire to order in Mesopotamia have been defeated.

Always a Capital

Bagdad itself has many of the qualifications of a capital for the Mesopotamian country. In its neighborhood the strong monarchs of ancient times placed their hanging gardens, their enormous walls and their treasure houses. Hammurabi, Nebuchadrezzar, Syrus the Mede, the Persians and Assyrians, Alexander and the Caliphs selected sites on the lower stretches of the great rivers and in the midst of the most fertile portion of the valleys for the seat of their rule. Bagdad is now the largest city of the land and the capital of the vilayet of the same name, the wealthiest in the Middle East. It has the greater strategic importance, being within easy distance of both rivers, well in from the coast and easily defensible by itself because of the productive locality which renders it independent of food supplies from abroad. None can pass from Armenia and Asia Minor or from Europe to Persia or the Persian Gulf without permission of the holder of Bagdad. It confronts all who would travel from Central Asia, from Turkestan, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, India and Persia to the Mediterranean. None can pass south of it because beyond the Euphrates to the south is the Arabian desert. And north, unless the traveller follows the rivers, he must cross endless mountains. With Bagdad in her control Great Britain need not worry about control of the hinterland. That falls in due course, as fruit falls from the tree to the man who stands guard at the foot of the tree. West to the desert, northwest to Aleppo, north to Armenia, east indefinitely into Persia will the influence of the holder of this city extend. No wonder that German made barracks and depots and storehouses and intrenchments stand at the foot of its minarets and that it has been the great eastern frontier post of the German Dream Empire and the base of the Turkish campaign of defense against the invaders of England and India.

Protecting India

Persia and Bagdad have been almost inseparably connected by fate since history began. The herdsmen of the vast and boundless plains of the east have always seemed to need the farmers of the lower river valleys. At any rate they have always coveted the wealth of the irrigated farms and the power that has held Bagdad has always found it necessary to have strong influence in Persia. Britain is no exception. This should prove rather a gain than a misfortune. Her settlements of Indians in Mesopotamia should prove a fine recruiting ground for fighting forces to keep the Persians in check and to offset the influence of the Russian Empire coming down through Turkestan into Persia and Afghanistan and threatening the old Indian Empire. Occupation and development of Mesopotamia from Bagdad should thus prove a strengthening of Britain's position in the Middle and Far East if not providing a solution of that problem.

The City of Aaron the Just

The Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, or "Aaron the Just," ruled from the Indus to Gibraltar, Bagdad being his capital, from 786 to 809 A.D. His absolute fairness to rich and poor alike made him the ideal and most beloved of Oriental despots. He made Bagdad a great centre of learning and civilization.

From the fourth to the ninth centuries A.D. the Caliphate of Bagdad under the successors of Mohammed enjoyed a golden age of literature and art, and Bagdad was the centre of the world's mathematical and scientific learning.

ONE OF THE YOUNGER CITIES OF MESOPOTAMIA

Ctesiphon, where Chosroes, the last of the Persian rulers of Mesopotamia, built his glorious palace only these ruins of the palace facade and main arch remained for the Anglo-Indian invaders under General Townshend to behold in the desert. The great arch of the palace bridges twelve of the land's forty-four centuries of history. Ctesiphon is eighteen miles southeast of Bagdad and on the Tigris. Where Chosroes of the Generous Mind planned his resistance to the Byzantine Empire and the Caliph's fanatics the Bedouins roam amid the ruins of war and time.