

DAR-UL-ISLAM

‘What shall I tell you?’

MARCO POLO

Ed 18

دار الإسلام

DAR-UL-ISLAM

A RECORD OF A JOURNEY
THROUGH TEN OF THE
ASIATIC PROVINCES OF TURKEY

BY

MARK SYKES

AUTHOR OF 'THROUGH FIVE TURKISH PROVINCES'
AND JOINT AUTHOR OF 'TACTICS AND MILITARY TRAINING'
BY MAJOR GEORGE D'ORDEL

WITH APPENDIX BY JOHN HUGH SMITH

AND

INTRODUCTION

BY

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WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO THE
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN
OF 'F' COMPANY, 3RD BATT. PRINCESS OF WALES' OWN
YORKSHIRE REGIMENT
WHO SERVED IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1900-2

AUTHOR'S ADVERTISEMENT TO THE READER

IN this brief note I wish to convey my thanks to those who so kindly assisted me in the production of the book : first, Mr. JOHN HUGH SMITH, who by his pleasant companionship suggested many ideas of which I availed myself ; secondly, Professor E. G. BROWNE, whom I thank not only for his condescension in writing the Preface, but also for his inspiring instruction in Eastern custom and mode of thought ; thirdly, Professor KEANE, who has reduced my spelling of Oriental names to order. My own, although interesting, was perhaps erratic. I would also thank SHAYKH HASSAN TAWFIQ for the Arab writing of my name and the texts which appear in various lithographs in the book.

I should like to point out that except for occasional notes I have left the whole narrative practically untouched, and it stands as it was written in DAR-UL-ISLAM.

INTRODUCTION

THESE few words of introduction to the book of my friend Captain MARK SYKES are written neither because I cherish any hope that they will add in any way to its value, or diminish in the least degree the risks—remote, as I hope—at which he hints in the opening paragraph, nor because I feel conscious of any special message to its readers urgently demanding utterance, but simply in response to his request; to which, remembering the many pleasant hours passed in his society, and the many occasions on which his entertaining anecdotes and reminiscences have relieved and brightened the tedium of academic life, I can only respond with a *sam'an wa tá'atan*, 'I hear and I obey.'

Captain SYKES has chosen as the title of his book the name DAR-UL-ISLAM, 'the Home of Islám,' a title specially appropriate to the Turkish Empire, with certain portions and characteristics of which the book deals. Just as to the mediæval Christian the world was divided into Christendom and Heathenese, so to the Muhammadan (I will not say 'the modern Muhammadan,' when, with-

out

out Mr. H. G. Wells' 'Time Machine,' the Middle Ages can still be reckoned not more than a week distant from London) the world is divided into the DAR-UL-ISLAM, or 'Home of Islám,' and the *Dáru'l-Harb*, or 'Abode of War.' The former, that is, the territories mainly inhabited by Muslims and ruled by a Muslim sovereign, has, alas! been sadly contracted and circumscribed in recent times, so that, of all the vast empire of the Caliphs once included under this title, only Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and Morocco still survive as independent states, while it appears doubtful if all of these will outlive the present generation. Of these four, without entering into the vexed question of the Ottoman Sultan's claim to be regarded as Caliph or 'Commander of the Faithful,' we may safely assert that Turkey is, by virtue of certain very sterling qualities of patriotism, courage, and dogged endurance, the most stable, the most powerful, and the least likely to succumb. Hardly any one who has had opportunities of forming an unprejudiced judgment has failed to recognise these qualities, or has remained altogether unfriendly to a people who, whatever their shortcomings may be, command the respect and esteem even of those who least desire the continuance of the Ottoman *régime*. I speak, of course, of the genuine Turk—not of the hybrid Levantine, who is too often taken by the casual and superficial observer as a national type

type, and still less of that fearful product of misapplied European or American zeal, so faithfully portrayed by the author of this book under the name of 'Gosmobaleet.' The intrinsic value of 'Western civilisation' in the ordinary newspaper sense is doubtful enough, even if Captain SYKES' definition of it in Chapter II be deemed a trifle harsh; but as a 'fancy dress,' badly fitted on unwilling or unsuitable recipients, it moves to tears rather than laughter.

I cannot profess to agree with every view expressed in this book, least of all with the author's estimate of Abu'l-'Alá of Ma'arra, who, cynic and sceptic as he unquestionably was, must certainly be reckoned, as Baron Von Kremer reckons him, one of the greatest and most original poets whom Western Asia has ever produced. Yet it is a pleasure to read a book so full of acute observations and so devoid of cant; and it is to be hoped that it may do something to remove the beams from the eyes of the seekers after motes. The author has travelled much and seen something of life in four continents, besides going through the South African campaign; and he has made it abundantly clear that, in his opinion, it does not befit the authors of the crusade in China to say too much about Turkish 'outrages,' and that the Turks are not the only nation which entrusts important duties to incompetent hands. Neither is he deceived by the specious platitudes

so dear to that deplorable product of modern European democracy, 'the man in the street,' as to 'extending the blessings of Western civilisation'; rather he regards with unconcealed apprehension the contingency of the Western Asiatics becoming 'a prey to capitalists of Europe and America, in which case a designing Imperial Boss might, untrammelled by the Government, reduce them to serfdom for the purpose of filling his pockets and gaining the name of Empire-maker.' He even speaks, at the beginning of Chapter IV, of 'the blight of European influence'; does not disguise his preference for countries with 'a past' to countries with 'a future'; recognises the fact that there is more true equality, because less snobbery and pretence, in Asia than in Europe; and emphasises the great truth that 'Orientals hate to be worried and hate to have their welfare attended to.' 'Oppression,' as he says, 'they can bear with equanimity, but interference for their own good they never brook with grace.'

This leads me to speak of a matter which for the last fifteen years has constantly occupied my thoughts: I mean the selection and training of those young Englishmen who are destined to serve their country in the East as either its representatives or its administrators. The system adopted in connection with the Indian Civil Service appears to me most open to criticism, the selection being based entirely on competitive examinations,
which

which can in no case afford any test of such important qualities as imagination, style, or personality, even if they were made to hinge more upon a knowledge of the languages, religions, and history of the East, and less on natural science, mathematics, and political economy ; which latter things, though all very well in their way, appear to me to be of quite secondary importance for the understanding of the character and idiosyncrasies of Eastern peoples, by which alone one would have thought it would be possible to govern them with tact, discretion, and sagacity. In this respect England has definitely retrograded since the days of the old East India College at Haileybury, where a really thorough training in Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, extending over a considerable time at the most impressionable period of life, produced men who really had some considerable acquaintance with the spirit of the East. It is, I think, generally recognised that Lord MACAULAY, whose deplorable dogmatism was proof against all arguments which did not accord with his own preconceptions, was more responsible than any one else for the destruction of Oriental learning in England ; but the course which he inaugurated has been steadily pursued by his successors, and ever since 1888, when I first began to teach Persian to Indian Civil Service selected candidates, three fresh changes detrimental to the study of Oriental languages have

have been introduced. At that period selected candidates spent two years at least in pursuing their special studies, and were permitted, if they desired to take an Honours Degree in Oriental languages or any other subject connected with their work, to remain at the University for three years ; while for Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit, prizes were given which, though of no great value, undoubtedly served as a great stimulus to work on account of the distinction which they conferred. The first retrograde step, taken, I think, in 1889, was the withdrawal of the permission to spend a third year in study ; the second, which soon followed it, was the abolition of the prizes, whereby, I suppose, a paltry economy of a hundred or two of guineas was effected ; and the third, which took place about 1893, reduced the period of probation nominally to a year, but in reality, what with vacations, delay in assigning provinces, and the like, to about six months, in which time it is expected that men whose minds are wearied with cramming, whose average age is certainly not under twenty-two, who are burdened with a quantity of legal and other subjects, and who know that, with the one exception of the vernacular of their province, hardly a pretence is made of taking Oriental languages seriously in the final examination, will obtain a knowledge of Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese, or Arabic which will be of some material

material use to them hereafter ! The large prospective pension will always induce a considerable number of good men to submit to the present or any other scheme which may be hereafter devised, even though it be still more closely assimilated to the Chinese type which appears to have been taken as a model. The contempt displayed for subjects which, though most germane to the nature of the service, are outside the ordinary school and university curriculum, is shown by the fact that in the open competition 900 marks are awarded for each of two varieties of mathematics, 750 each for Latin and Greek, and 600 for each of the natural sciences ; but for Arabic and Sanskrit, though the standard is appallingly high, only 500 marks. And similarly a great light of the University of Oxford remarked recently that 'no man worth his salt' would take up Arabic without the distinct prospect of a career : a fine conception of humane and liberal scholarship which tempts us to exclaim, in the words of a Persian poet—

Chu kufr az Ka'ba bar khizad, kujâ mânad Musulmâni ?

'When blasphemy arises from the Ka'ba,* where does Muhammadanism remain ?'

Turning now to the Eastern Consular Service, which is more germane to the subject of this book, a much brighter picture presents itself. This service has always

* The great mosque at Mecca, the holy of holies of Islâm.

appeared

appeared to me, next to the diplomatic, to offer the most attractive of careers, and I still retain a vivid recollection of my disappointment when I found that the knowledge of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, by which I had hoped to enter it, afforded no means of doing so, only European languages being admitted in the entrance examination. On the other hand the successful candidates are almost always good linguists, men who have travelled or lived abroad, and whose mental freshness has not been destroyed by cramming with mathematics, natural sciences, and political economy; and their two years' probation, with its much higher linguistic ideals, is incomparably more valuable than that of selected candidates for the Indian Civil Service. The Foreign Office, moreover, which is responsible for choosing and training these Student Interpreters destined for the Consular Service, is, so far as my experience goes, not only the pleasantest Government Office with which to have dealings, but the most reasonable, and the development of this branch of its work, if at times slow, has been sound, steady, and always in the direction of greater efficiency.

Within the last year or so a still greater impulse has been given to the study of Arabic for administrative purposes by the scheme recently adopted by the Governments of Egypt and the Soudan for the selection
and

and training of candidates for their service. It would be out of place to discuss this more fully here, but I cannot refrain from expressing my profound conviction that if it endures for any length of time it will produce a class of administrators in the East who will command the respect and affection of those committed to their charge in a quite exceptional degree, and I believe that Lord CROMER and Sir ELDON GORST, to whom above all others this scheme owes its existence, will be gratefully remembered for all time as the restorers of that edifice which Lord MACAULAY destroyed. Captain SYKES, at the end of Chapter VI, has called attention to the point on which hinges all that I have said. 'It would be well,' he remarks, addressing 'budding British Consuls' (and the remark applies with nearly equal force to other young Englishmen serving their country in Eastern lands) 'for them to remember that, no matter what their feelings may be, it would be much wiser to maintain the best relations possible with (native) officials, taking every opportunity to entertain them, for if the Consul in a district knows the various functionaries personally and intimately, he will be able to act with much more effect in times of crisis ; besides, being well acquainted with the character and nature of the men he has to deal with, his influence will be stronger.'

Captain SYKES is an acute observer, and singularly

free from the prejudices which obscure the outlook of so many of even the most intelligent and conscientious travellers in the East. That he has in this book mingled many weighty observations and valuable suggestions with much matter couched in a lighter strain should not cause it to be ignored or laid aside half read by those who interest themselves in the state of the Turkish Empire. These I would remind of the old Arabian proverb, *Al-hazlu fi'l-kalâm ka'l-milhi fi't-ta'âm*, 'the jest in discourse is like the salt in food.'

EDWARD G. BROWNE.

CAMBRIDGE, *March 11, 1904*

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APPENDIX

*JOHN HUGH SMITH'S DIARY OF A JOURNEY FROM
ALEPPO TO URFA BY WAY OF DEIR ZOR AND
THE KHABUR.*

ON January 27 I left Mark Sykes at Aleppo and started for the Euphrates Valley, intending to join him again in forty days at Urfa.

For the first two days the road runs through country of very little interest. On each side a vast cultivated plain stretches to the horizon, dotted here and there with little villages of mud-built beehive-shaped huts. It is said by archæologists that these are relics of the Assyrian Empire, since the houses carved on the stones found at Nineveh are identical with them; but the great objection to this theory is that villages built in this style are found in a very limited area, and that far away from Nineveh. They begin as far south as Khan Shaykhun, and their northern and eastern limits are Kilis and the Euphrates.

I slept the night at a little village, Deir Hafer, and the next day reached Meskene and the Euphrates Valley. Here the whole character of the scenery changes, and I saw the gleaming river flowing through stretches of brushwood flanked by low chalk hills, but it vanished from view on our reaching the valley. I saw camps of black tents for the first time, and knew that I was in the country of the Bedawin. Roughly speaking, the whole of Mesopotamia from Meskene to Deir Zor, and as far north as Urfa and Mosul, is peopled by Arabs who for centuries have pressed north from Arabia. They are divided into tribes of which the Shammar and the Anazeh, who inhabit the country north and south of the Euphrates respectively, are the most important. These are the richest and most warlike of all the Bedawin tribes, but it must not be forgotten that they are only
two

two among many. Along the Khabur, for instance, one finds the Aghedaat, the Gibbur, and the Baggara, pastoral people, who do not wander very far ; and along the Euphrates one meets the Afudli, so-called Bedawin Fellaheen, who live in tents, but who cultivate the ground and have herds of sheep and buffalo ; the towns of Mesopotamia are peopled by Arabs who have forsaken their old way of life—and it must be confessed that the Bedawi deteriorates rapidly when he no longer lives in tents. A more miserable and diseased race than the inhabitants of Deir Zor and Ragga it is difficult to imagine, and it must take many generations to convert a Bedawi into a sleek and industrious town Arab, such as those to be found in Damascus or Baghdad, who would seem almost to belong to another nation.

At Meskene I camped for one night, and the next day moved across the valley to the Euphrates. I came upon the river suddenly, flowing slowly and smoothly in the frosty sunlight here and there breaking into brilliant shallows. After we had shouted for some time the ferry-boat appeared. It was a large punt propelled by two Arabs in some mysterious method of their own which was neither rowing nor punting, but a combination of the two. Then I had the mules unloaded, but before the first batch could be embarked a violent quarrel broke out between Mustapha, a Kurdish muleteer, and one of my escort of soldiers. Mustapha made statements about the soldier's mother and sisters that I hope, and indeed believe, were mere suppositions ; then they fell to fighting in the noisy, harmless way of Orientals. I separated them and took the soldier aside to calm him, leaving Joseph to superintend the business in hand. Presently the latter dashed up to me and said, ' With the muleteers I can do no good, though I curse the father and mother of each one of them.' Yet somehow, after two hours of threatening and shouting, everything had been carried over, and we started, intending to pass the night with some Bedawin Fellaheen. We rode for three hours through country very typical of Northern Mesopotamia. Close to the river it is possible to raise crops by artificial irrigation, while beyond a rolling grass plain stretches northward ; such a country would be almost ideal for graziers, who would not need

so much capital as agriculturists, for which calling the present population is entirely unsuited. All Bedawin are herdsmen, but inveterate hatred of manual work will render it necessary to introduce an entirely new race if Mesopotamia is ever to be cultivated, as the advocates of the Baghdad Railway propose.

Difficulties such as these have been entirely neglected in the literature that has arisen over this project. German authors, notably Herr Paul Robach, show a great knowledge of the possibilities of the country, though it seems strange that their arguments should be supported chiefly by facts drawn from archæology, while entirely neglecting such a question as the want of labour. But of this I shall have more to say later.

About four o'clock in the afternoon I reached my camping-ground close to the tents of some Bedawin Fellaheen, and, on dismounting, was met by a man who came from the Shaykh's tent inviting me to coffee. Here I found a number of ragged Arabs sitting gravely round a wood fire on which was placed the large coffee-pot that stands on every nomad's hearth from Hadramaut to Kurdistan. Besides the Arabs there were a few soldiers, who had come to collect taxes, and who checked all complaints on the subject of the exactions of Ibrahim Pacha, the commander of the Hamidieh, in which my host seemed very anxious to indulge. The Shaykh himself was an old man, who suffered from deafness and some mysterious malady whose nature I was unable to understand, and which I was requested to cure. After about a quarter of an hour I returned to my tent, where in a short time I received a return visit from the Shaykh. I gave him coffee, and he departed; but I was not left in peace long, for soon two Greeks appeared, who were living in the Bedawin camp and collected liquorice, which they sold in Alexandretta. It may here be mentioned that this drug subsequently finds its way to America, where it is used for the adulteration of tobacco.

Again after dinner I paid a visit to the Shaykh's tent, hoping to elicit some information from the men who gathered there; but they were too full of the injustice and exactions of the Hamidieh to speak of anything else, and on this subject it was not safe to talk in the presence of the soldiers. This was the
first

first glimpse I had of that movement which will probably in future have so large an effect on the destinies of Mesopotamia—that is, the gradual retreat of the Arabs before the Hamidieh, who are mostly Kurds by race, and whose strength lies in their superior armament and the support of the Government.

Next morning I started for Jaafa, where there is a ruined castle,* on the bank of the Euphrates, which I was anxious to visit. My road lay through a grass country, dotted here and there with a few black tents, near which I saw large flocks of sheep. About 11 A.M. I saw in the distance the castle of Jaafa, which I reached after another two hours' ride. It stands on a mound (which I think is natural) high above the low stretches of brushwood that line the river-bank; behind it is a range of hills—one of those ranges that confine the Euphrates on both sides as far as Ragga. Unfortunately the walls and towers, built of clay brick, stand in ruins, and the castle is not nearly in as good a state of preservation as that of Palmyra, which it resembles in many respects. Fortunately, however, a minaret, standing in the centre of the mound, is almost perfect: it is crowned with an inscription which Joseph deciphered, composed of a sacred text of no importance, and from which the builder's name is gone. As to the date or the history of the castle I could find no reference; but Joseph was full of information, explaining all antiquities, as is his wont, by a book of Bedawin fairy stories, of which he is very fond. At a short distance from the castle is the tomb of that Sultan Suleiman which has recently been restored, and to which an Arab has been attached by the present Government to preserve it from profanation. Who this Sultan was I was for a long time unable to discover. My soldiers suggested that he was the Sultan Sulciman the Magnificent. Of course this is nonsense, as he died in Europe. The tomb contains, I believe, the father of Ertoghrul, one of the earliest of the Ottoman sultans, who, according to Creasy, was drowned in the Euphrates.

* This castle has not, as far as I know, been described by travellers; I was directed to it by Mr. Shallum, the dragoman of the British Consulate at Aleppo.

In the course of the evening I heard that the northern Anazeh, under Hakim Beg, were in the neighbourhood ; and as the servant of the tomb professed to know of their whereabouts I determined next day to go and visit them. It will no doubt seem strange that the Anazeh, whose usual camping-grounds lie to the south of the Euphrates, should have crossed the river. The reason was that, owing to the war between Ibrahim Pacha of the Hamidieh and Faris Pacha of the Shammar Bedawin, the Anazeh had crossed the river in summer, when the water was low, to help the former ; for the Anazeh are the hereditary enemies of the Shammar ; but the river had risen behind them, and consequently they were unable to return to their usual winter quarters in Arabia.

Next morning (February 1) I sent the mules on to a camping-ground some six hours distant, and taking Joseph, a soldier, and Mustapha Kurdi, with some provisions, started off, with the servant of the tomb as a guide, to the tents of the Anazeh. We left the river behind us and rode into the rolling grass-land of Upper Mesopotamia ; but, though we came upon many encampments, we could not find that of the Shaykh, and after four hours' riding gave up our quest and tried to rejoin the caravan. This, however, we were not able to do, although we found the road by which it had passed, and heard vague reports of them from two Bedawin who were eating a jackal they had just shot. At last, after a long day of ten or eleven hours, we rode towards some lights that we saw at some half-hour's distance ; these turned out to be an encampment of poor Bedawin, flying from Ibrahim Pacha, who had recently plundered them. I passed the night comfortably in the Shaykh's tent in front of a blazing fire, after a fairly satisfying supper of hot bread and sour milk. My hosts were so poor that they could not afford coffee.

Next morning with the first grey of dawn I rode into Ragga, some three hours distant, where I was joined later in the day by my caravan, which had passed the night with some Bedawin. Ragga is a wretched town, built of mud, populated by low Bedawin who have left the nomad life, a sprinkling of Kurds and Turks, and a few Circassians from Ras el Ain. The

position of the town is rather fine: it stands on rising ground above a bend of the Euphrates. Close behind the town are the extensive ruins of an old Abassid palace of Haroun al Rashid. These consist of a high mud wall enclosing a square of many acres, in which stand the ruins of a mosque in fair preservation, a fragment of the old palace, and in one corner a gateway in almost perfect condition. In every direction fragments of porcelain tiles and pieces of broken alabaster are strewn upon the ground. To-day the ruins, which consist of dingy clay bricks, give little idea of magnificence, but doubtless these were originally decorated with tiles that now lie scattered and broken. The Government have forbidden the natives to dig for antiquities in the ruins—a wise provision, since these will be preserved for properly equipped scientific expeditions. They would probably secure some fine specimens of Arab tiling and porcelain and a few inscriptions in Kufic, such as one which I tried in vain to copy.

The next day I crossed the Euphrates again on my way to Deir Zor. The road winds through thickets and desert inhabited only by poor Bedawin, and is devoid of any interest. At last, after three days, I reached Deir Zor, for which I was heartily thankful, though the town does not possess any very great attractions. It lies at the distance of some three-quarters of a mile from the Euphrates, on the banks of a small and dirty stream spanned by an iron bridge, and though not inconsiderable in size it has no fine buildings, the houses for the most part being built of mud, with here and there a modern stone serai barrack or hospital of squalid and pretentious ugliness. The population is identical with that of the Ragga. The children and some of the men are often good-looking, but many lack an eye or else squint—a misfortune terribly common among Arabs. Deir Zor is the seat of government of an independent mutesarif, whose chief duty consists in keeping the Bedawin tribes in order and in extracting from them such taxes as it is possible to collect. Of course the problem of governing nomad Arabs is one of extreme difficulty, owing to the fact that they differ in race and language from the Turks, and moreover have their own tribal organisation

organisation ; also they resent any interference with their petty and interminable quarrels. The Turkish Government is content to let them fight among themselves as long as one tribe does not get too strong (in which case soldiers are sent to help the weaker) and caravans and villagers are not molested ; and fair order is kept throughout the country by means of police placed on the banks of the Euphrates and the Khabur at intervals of about a day's ride.

While I was encamped outside Deir Zor I saw an example of the dealings of the Government with the Bedawin, which is suggestive and interesting. Some of the Anazeh, who had come to the town to make purchases, had left their camels, with a few women to guard them, in an open space not far from my tents. Suddenly I saw policemen rush out of the town to seize the camels—a score or so in number. These were impounded, and the men and women put in prison. I asked why, and was told that a rich grazier of Homs had lost some lambs to an Anazeh 'ghazu'—as plundering expeditions are called in Arabic—and these camels would be retained till restitution had been made. This is not the action of a strong Government, but it is characteristic of a policy which is, perhaps, the best possible, and to a certain extent successful ; for the country is as yet really unsubdued. For it must never be forgotten that though the Shaykhs of those tribes who are perpetually at war, such as Faris and Muslet of the Shammār and Gibbur Arabs and Ibrahim of the Melli Kurds, may be called Pachas, it does not follow that they are really attached to Turkish rule, and, though gangs of brigands have been organised into Hamidieh regiments of irregular cavalry, that they necessarily are, or would be, loyal soldiers in time of war. The determining factor in this case, it seems to me, would be the opinion of these tribes with regard to the position of the Sultan as Caliph, and the extent to which the war in question was regarded as jihad. Were it so regarded, I think the Kurds would join the Turks against the common enemy. As to the Arabs, it is difficult to say. I have been told that in secret the Sultan's claim to the Caliphate is scorned by them.

I think that those who write of the present weakness of Turkey in many cases forget the great element of strength which the Sultan possesses, and which may be called 'the potential unity of Islam.' Divided as the Ottoman Empire is in time of peace by petty tribal and racial jealousies, it always seems to me possible that when confronted with a real danger these would disappear in the greater passion of religious enthusiasm.

Before I leave the subject I ought to mention a story told me by one of my escort, which illustrates the relations of the Turkish soldiers to the Bedawin. I had been asking questions about the Anazeh. 'Do I know them?' he said. 'Wallah, I do; did not I wound thirteen of their men and camels that day at Mudik? Thus it was. I and my comrade were there, and the villagers came and said, "The camels of the Anazeh are eating our water-melons; go and drive them away." So I and my comrade went to fetch our mules from the place where we had left them tethered, and when we came there, his mule had broken loose. So I left him to catch it, and mounting mine took my rifle and rode as fast as I could to the field of water-melons. But as I went my belt of cartridges broke and fell to the ground, and such was my haste that I knew it not; so I came upon the camels and the men of the Anazeh that were with them, with a mule and a rifle indeed, but no cartridges; and I cried to them to drive away the camels. But they laughed and pulled me from the mule and beat me. Further they said to me, "We will kill thee"; and I answered, "Well may you do this, seeing that I am unarmed; but this matter also is in the hands of God." But one of their Shaykhs rode up and said, "What! Will you kill this man, who is the son of the Sultan? If you do this thing the matter will never be finished." So they let me go, and I returned and found my cartridge-belt and my comrade, and then we came again to them and shot, and I wounded thirteen men and camels, and Wallah! one man with two shots in the arm.'

I spent three days at Deir Zor, encamped near the town, and passed my time in collecting information concerning the country on each side of the Khabur, through which I proposed to
travel

travel. For most of this I was indebted to a delightful Circassian, colonel of the police, who did all that was possible to help me.

I must not forget to mention the sentries who guarded my tents. They came out four in number on my arrival, bringing with them a coffee-pot and some old quilts, as they intended to pass the time in sleeping and conversation; but when they saw my Mauser pistol, with which I was shooting at a mark, they became filled with emulation, and spent most of the afternoon firing with a Remington at a tin pot 100 yards away. Unfortunately they placed the pot, through sheer absent-mindedness, between them and the town, through the streets of which, therefore, the bullets whistled, until they had the misfortune to frighten a superior officer, who rode angrily out of the town to stop them. One of them, Ramazan Shawish, had a delightful repertory of stories which he told me every evening. He is a born *raconteur*, and I advise any one who passes through Deir Zor to inquire after him.*

On February 10 I crossed the Euphrates for the third time. By 12 noon we had the camp pitched on the other side of the river close to a village called Hasaniyé, directly opposite to Deir Zor. Some twenty yards from my tent-door was the great river, which grew blood-red in the sunset—one of those Eastern sunsets which are the bane of all readers of books of Eastern travel.

Previous to the foundation of the Hamidieh cavalry under Ibrahim Pacha, Northern Mesopotamia was divided between the pure Arab tribe of the Shammar Bedawin, subject to whom were the less important tribes of Baggara, Gibbur, Aghedaat, and Sherabin, and the Kurdish nomads who were constantly fighting among each other. The Shammar were practically supreme throughout Northern Mesopotamia, and their camping-grounds extended as far north as Viranshahir, a small town to the south-east of Urfa. But some ten years ago the Kurdish nomads were formed into Hamidieh regiments of irregular cavalry under

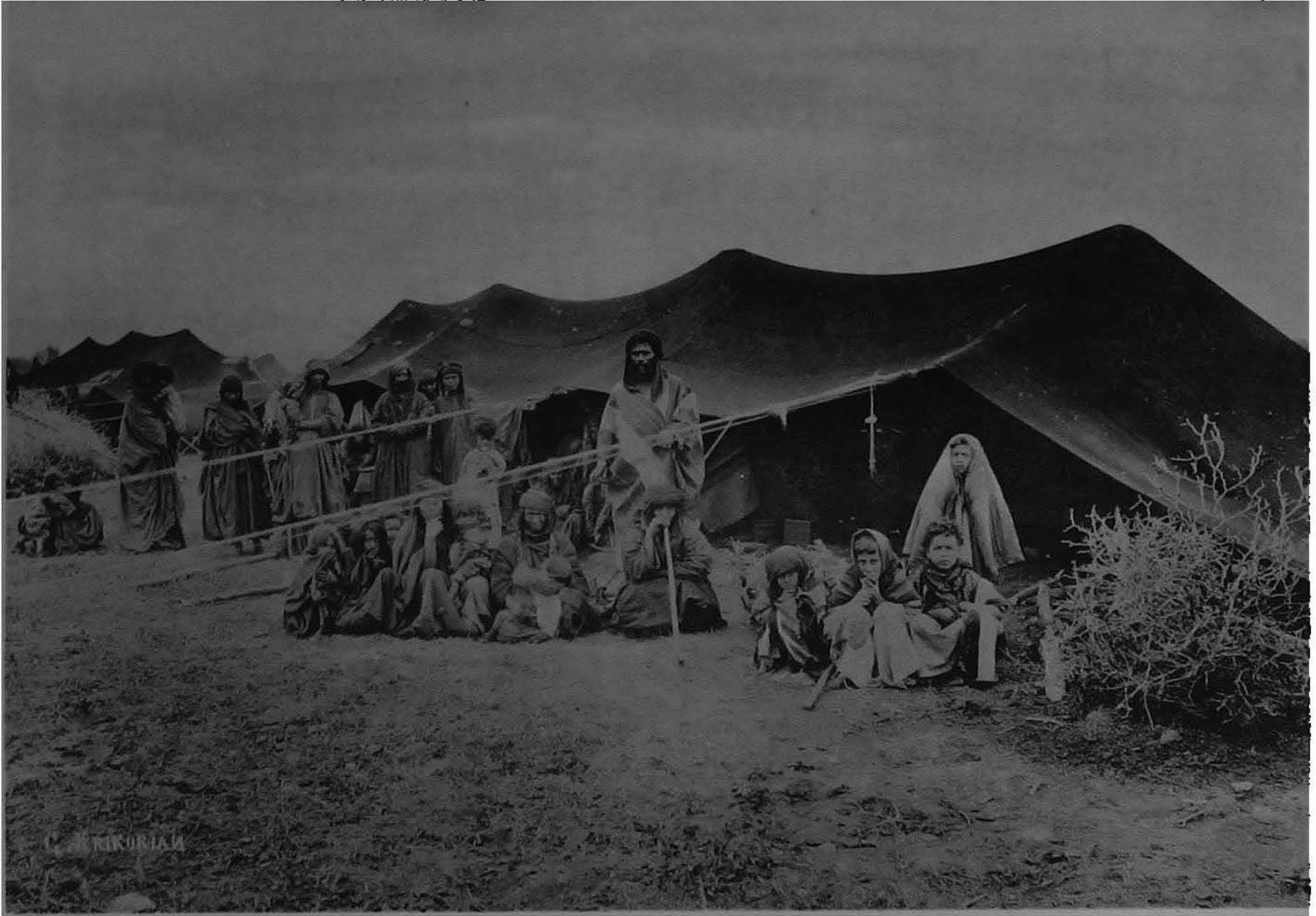
* These were of so oriental a character that, in the absence of a Kamashastra Society, the retailing of them had better be delayed.

Ibrahim

Ibrahim Pacha, originally Aga of the Melli tribe, and of mixed Kurdish and Bedawin descent. Further, as soldiers of the Sultan, they are armed with Martini rifles. This at once gave them a conspicuous advantage over the Arabs, who were at the same time weakened by disputes between Faris, the Shaykh of the Shammar on the Khabur, and Jarulla, Shaykh of the Shammar near Mosul. Two years ago war broke out between Faris and Ibrahim Pacha. At first the Arabs had the best of it, and drove the Kurds back to Viranshahir, which they nearly captured; but at that moment the Government, fearing lest the Arabs should grow too powerful, sent soldiers to help Ibrahim Pacha, and they were driven back. Then Faris summoned his nephew Jarulla from near Mosul, and the southern Anazeh, to help him, while Ibrahim Pacha summoned the northern Anazeh under their chief Hakim Beg. Jarulla came from near Mosul, but since his family had for many years been at war with Faris he chose to fight against him rather than for him. Hakim Beg, on the other hand, who had crossed the Euphrates to help Ibrahim Pacha, refused to fight against the Shammar when he heard that they were allied with the southern Anazeh. This produced a temporary lull in the hostilities; but just before my arrival in Mesopotamia matters had been further complicated by a telegram from Constantinople ordering Ibrahim Pacha to send Jarulla back to his own country. Faris, however, had refused to let him pass, and active hostilities between them were expected every day.

I may note here that the Bedawin swim the river on inflated skins. They place their clothes inside the skins, which are then blown out, and not only support them, but keep everything dry. The ferry is naturally dear, and its dearness is generally enhanced, if one is not careful, owing to the fact that its proprietor is an Armenian, who will assuredly attempt to cheat the unwary.

My first day's march was a long one of ten hours from Hasaniyé to Sauar, a police post on the Khabur. The view on either side of the road was monotonous; there was nothing but a scantily turfed plain stretching to the horizon. Midway
between



BEDAWIN.

between Sauar and Hasaniyé, at a distance of fifty yards from the road, is a spring of water. I spent most of the day in talking to a Kurd, Mahmoud by name, who was coming with me for protection, his eventual destination being Mardinc, whence he hoped to take sheep. Though dressed in rags and riding on a lame pony, he had three hundred Turkish pounds in his belt. Ibrahim Pacha he hated; Faris of the Shammar he liked, who gave him safe-conduct on the payment of a pound per flock of sheep.

I reached Sauar towards evening. It is a little mud fort, close to the river, and surrounded by the tents of the poor Bedawin, who manage to raise scanty crops of millet by means of artificial irrigation.

The next day we left for Margada, a camping-ground six hours distant on the river-side. For the first time we heard that the political situation was at all serious, and there were rumours of plundering expeditions wandering about the country. These, however, I was assured would not attack me, since I had an escort.

The road that day lay along the river-bank, beyond which lay the rolling plains of Southern Mesopotamia, covered with tents of the Baggara and Aghedaat. To my left hand there was still little to be seen but the boundless plain, dotted here and there with low hills on which are the graves of the Bedawin. In front of me was a low tableland called El Hamma, that runs east to the Khabur.

I reached Margada earlier than I had expected, and so pushed on to an encampment of the Aghedaat, some two hours distant. Here I was hospitably received, though the Shaykhs were absent: they had gone to Faris, whose allies they were, to help him. There were about a hundred tents in the camp and many flocks of sheep, but I saw more boys and women than men—these had gone to the war, and their horses and lances stood no longer at the doors of the tents.

Next morning I left the Bedawin and started for Sheddade, some seven hours distant. The road lay through desert, a mile or two to the west of the Khabur, which we did not meet again
till

till we reached our destination. I could see through my binoculars that the country on the other side of the river was covered with Bedawin: these were the Shammar under Faris, and they would move on the morrow, against Jarulla, who was camping in the Singar Hills, the purple outline of which broke the horizon to the north-east. Between the two armies lay a few soldiers who would try to stop the fighting if it were possible, and if not, return to their station.

Sheddade, which I reached about three in the afternoon, is a mud fort for police overlooking the Khabur. There is a ferry here for those who take the desert road to Mosul, which crosses Northern Mesopotamia and passes close under the Singar Hills. Behind the fort rises a low hill crowned with a Bedawin graveyard: here, I believe, lies Mohammed Emin, Shaykh of the Gibbur, of whom Sir Henry Layard gives an account in one of his books.

Next morning I started at 7 A.M. for Taban, or rather for a camping-ground opposite Taban, a hill that lies to the east of the river.

At Sheddade I had left the two policemen who had come from Deir Zor and taken two others, one of whom had an eventful history. He was from Kerkuk (he told me), and in early life was a brigand by profession, preying on the caravans from Baghdad, and, like most of the Kurds near Kerkuk, making occasional expeditions into Persia. But, preferring, as he said, a quiet life, he had turned policeman, and was not altogether satisfied with the change. 'What have I got from the Government?' he said. 'Nothing; my horse is my own, my rifle is my own. If I do not get my pay regularly I shall go back to my old life.'

Towards 11 o'clock we drew near to Agage, the site of the Assyrian city Arban, which was visited and excavated by Layard; and I galloped on ahead of the caravan to see the ruins. Their situation is impressive. The river, lined with dry and rustling reeds, winds close under the hill, which rises precipitously above it. Layard, I found, had driven horizontal passages through the cliff, by which he extracted the sculptures
which

which are now in the British Museum : these passages are now inhabited by jackals and hyænas. At the mouth of one of them lies a small man-faced bull, three feet in height, which is inferior in workmanship to the sculptures of Nineveh. Mr. King, of the British Museum, explains this by saying that it represents the provincial art of Assyria. I stayed about an hour in the ruins and then rode on to the camp of the Baggara Bedawins opposite to Tell Taban.

Next day was a short one, and by 12 o'clock I reached my destination, Tell Heseke, a station for infantry mounted on mules at the bend of the Khabur, which henceforward flows east, and not south. The Tell is probably the site of a ruined town, and stands up amid a grassy plain, here and there broken by hills of obviously volcanic origin, while to the south lies the low range of Jebel Abd ul Aziz. Between Tell Heseke and Urfa I heard that the road was more insecure than that by which I had come ; consequently I had taken letters from Deir Zor to the officer in command to furnish me with a further escort. When I arrived, however, the officer was absent, and as only two soldiers remained at the post I had to wait a day till more arrived. I was not altogether displeased at the delay, as my men and mules were somewhat tired ; and I spent my time in collecting stories from the policeman and the ex-brigand touching his past life. These were mostly so sordid and ghastly that they completely divested me of any sentimentality with regard to highwaymen and such like which I may have acquired.

In the afternoon of the second day I heard the sound of a trumpet and saw the officer in question trotting towards my tents with twenty infantry men mounted on mules. He had just arrived from Sheddade, where he had succeeded in getting in between the armies of Faris and Jarulla, and so preventing a fight.

From this fact those who know Lady Anne Blunt's ' Bedouins of the Euphrates ' will realise how much the Government has strengthened its position with regard to these tribes, and also they will understand the character of the Bedawin warfare. I am far from denying that this may be serious when

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any important interests are concerned ; and by 'important' I mean interests that concern property, such as camping-grounds—these the Bedawin, who is a Semite, and a Semite of a particularly pure race, takes very seriously. But it must be remembered—and those who have studied Lord Beaconsfield's career are not likely to forget it—that one of the chief elements in Semitic success is the possession of a brilliant imagination which finds an outlet in a certain histrionism. Well, the Bedawi is to a great extent a histrion, and much as I like and respect him, I must admit that his ferocity, his chivalry, and his generosity are to a large extent myths—myths that he has created himself, and propagates persistently and well.

The officer gave me the required escort of eight mounted infantry. It is not too much to say that these soldiers have to a great extent quieted the country-side. Their method of procedure is to ride out when they see a ghazu passing and drive it back, taking what they want from it ; consequently the officer in command comes to be easily the best mounted man in Mesopotamia. He has a white delul or trotting camel, eight or ten Arab mares of the best, and a white mule, rachwan ; that is to say, broken to a kind of swift amble, very comfortable for long journeys.

I left Tell Heseke for Ras el Ain. My way lay through the desert with the Khabur on my right hand and Jebel Abd ul Aziz on my left. Between these two landmarks the road runs through the plain, here and there relieved by Tells, which are probably the ruins of ancient towns. Such certainly is Tell Migdel, visited by Layard in 1850, and Tell Roman on the north side of the Khabur, at the foot of which is a strip of land where pomegranates and grapes grow every year. There is no local tradition of their having been planted there, and the only possible theory for their existence seems to be that they are the relic of an old town, whose ruins are now completely grass-grown. According to the Bedawin, the country-side abounds in ruins, and would probably repay the visit of an archæological expedition ; for it must be remembered that Sir Henry Layard never left the Khabur and no archæologist has visited the plain to the north.

I heard

I heard that some years since a cave was found containing statues of men and women, apparently at a great feast ; my informant added that those who made this discovery fled away in terror, considering the place to be haunted by devils. About three o'clock in the afternoon I reached the tents of the Sherabin Bedawin and encamped for the night.

The evening was disturbed by a quarrel between the cook and the dragoman. Its origin was obscure, as are most Oriental quarrels, and it probably would have ended peacefully but for the fact that Joseph Shamali, the cook, cursed the religion of Joseph Hadad, the dragoman, which between Arabs* is an unpardonable offence. Joseph Hadad became dramatically aggrieved, and, sitting on the ground with his head wrapped up in a kafijeh, explained to me and to a circle of admiring muleteers that if he had been in Jerusalem, and not in this 'damdebil country,' he would have stuck a knife into the 'bollo' of the cook ('bollo,' I should explain, is a word compounded of the English 'belly' and the Arabic 'ulbo'). After about two hours he was pacified, partly, I think, by my refusal to take him seriously.

Next day I continued my journey to Ras el Ain. The country was the same as on the previous day, with the exception that we left the range of Jebel Abd ul Aziz behind and marched towards the hills that lie to the north round Viranshahir. About three in the afternoon I passed Safah, a little Circassian village, and soon after saw to the south the gleam of some distant marshes ; about four o'clock we crossed a tributary of the Khabur and reached Ras el Ain. This little town stands close to the source of the Khabur, which rises, lukewarm and slightly impregnated with sulphur, in a wood of willows. The site is attractive to a degree to one who, like myself, had seen nothing but desert for several weeks. The spring is surrounded by a pool of rippling, limpid water, swarming with fish ; and throughout the adjacent meadows are herons, kingfishers, spotted black and white, and yellow wagtails. One would expect to find a town on so

* I should also mention the fact that they were both Christians ; no Christian would dare to curse a Moslem's faith.

charming

charming a spot, and it is evident from the ruins that were shown me next day that, though the existing Ras el Ain is but forty years old, it stands on a much older site. I believe that it was originally the seat of a crusading bishop, a view which is confirmed by the fact that a mediæval helmet of obviously European workmanship has lately been discovered near the town. On all sides—to the south, west, and east—stretches a rolling plain; on the north only is the horizon definitely broken by the snow-capped mountains of Kurdistan.

The inhabitants are, with a few exceptions, Circassians, who came to Mesopotamia forty years since, some nine thousand strong, and tried to found a colony in a Mohammedan country. At that date Daghistan had just been conquered by the Russians, against whom a traditional hatred exists to this day. Accordingly they built Ras el Ain, Garra, Safah, and several other towns, whose names have perished and which stand in ruins throughout the surrounding country. But circumstances have not been favourable to them. The land, of course, is abundantly fertile, but local conditions are unsuited to agricultural prosperity. On all sides are tribes who live by plunder: to the south the Shammar, to the east Yezidis, to the north the Hamidieh. Thus the Circassians have been prevented from settling down to a peaceful existence as in Syria, where the colony of Jairash is a great success. Further, their numbers have been thinned by a disease which rages in Northern Mesopotamia, and by the emigration of many of their number to Deir Zor, Ragga, and Baghdad, where they pick up a precarious living by horse-dealing. I heard a story of their relations with the Shammar at the time of their arrival in Mesopotamia, which is of a certain interest, though probably legendary in character. This is how it was told me by one Mirza at Ragga:

‘At first when the Circassians came to Ras el Ain, the Shammar made ghazu against them and took their cattle and horses; but one day the men of Ras el Ain caught twenty of their Bedawin and slew them. And one they took and bored a hole in him and blew him up full of wind, as one might blow up a sheepskin; and then they set him up outside Ras el Ain

so that all who came by said, "Mashallah, what is this? See what the Circassians have done to the Shammar." But the Shammar bethought them how they might be avenged, and they devised this plot. They came to Ras el Ain and said, "Ho! ye Circassians, the Anazeh have made war on us; come ye and help." And those who knew not the deceit of the Bedawin went with them—many men, each one with his rifle—into the desert. And the Shammar said, "See you not those horsemen there in the desert? They are the Anazeh; now, do ye, who have rifles, go in front; we are Bedawin, and have but lances!" So the Circassians went forward, and, lo! there were no Anazeh, but only another band of the Shammar. Then were the men of Ras el Ain caught between two bands of the Bedawin, before and behind, and that day there fell of them fifty.'

I had letters to the Shaykh of Ras el Ain from the officer in command at Tell Heseke, and I was treated with the greatest courtesy: he invited me to his house, and when I refused on the ground that I had my own tents he sent me a lamb each day as a present.

The morning after my arrival I went to his house and was served with a meal of tea and cakes, followed by Bedawin coffee, in the company of the chief man of the town. The room in which I was received had a divan running round the sides. I was given a seat next the fire; beside me was Joseph Hadad, to act as interpreter; next to him a Circassian from the same tribe as Shamil, who made so brave a resistance against the Russians, and beyond him other friends of the Shaykh. I was besieged with a torrent of questions about the Transvaal war and about England. Some one said, 'Inshallah! [Please God] one day the Sultan and the King of India will make war together against the Muscovites.'

The only other amusing incident that I can recall of my stay at Ras el Ain was Joseph's attempt to sell a Circassian a lame horse. The latter walked round the horse, looked at his teeth, and said, 'Wallah, he is older far than my mother.'

Short as my stay had been among the Circassians, I was greatly

greatly impressed by the many qualities which would under more favourable circumstances achieve something substantial: they are a race of brave fighters, and yet are not fighters only. Unlike the Bedawin, they do not consider ghazu as anything but a *pis-aller*. They are intelligent in a particular hard-headed way, that reminds one more of Europeans than of Asiatics; and consequently, when they are introduced into the Turk's administration, they make themselves felt, and become conspicuous, if only for villainy.

Further, their carved silver work possesses artistic merits of a very high order: it is bold in design and delicate in execution. Curiously enough, this side of their character has deteriorated under Russian rule, and the Circassian work I have seen at Tiflis shows signs of degeneration and vulgarity. I think it should here be said that the idea, that found favour in Germany some years ago, of colonising Northern Mesopotamia is chimerical; the climate is not suited to Europeans, and the non-success of the Circassians, a people accustomed to the mountains of Daghistan, is a proof of this.

It would be difficult to imagine any country more unattractive than the desert between Ras el Ain and Viranshahir, or weather more dismal than that in which I traversed it. It was a grey, cold, windy day, and the march was a long one through dreary wastes of uncultivated land that showed no signs of life, till I reached a camp of Nomad Kurds about four o'clock in the afternoon, and soon after cultivated fields, and then Viranshahir.

The most striking characteristic of this town, which I should think would render it unique, is the fact that it is built among ruins, which stand untouched amid khans and bazaars. It is surrounded by a wall of evidently Byzantine origin, and it contains a basilica in a fair state of preservation; while close to the town are the ruins of an ancient castle and a number of subterranean tombs with stone doors that open and shut, most of them marked with a cross, while on the lintels are Greek inscriptions. It is inhabited by Kurds and Armenians and Syrian Christians, who own all the stalls in the bazaars and cultivate the surrounding country. It is for this latter purpose that they
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are encouraged to come to the town by Ibrahim Pacha, the Commander of the Hamidieh Cavalry, who seems to have ideas as to the development of his territory. Where his rule exists the Christians have suffered neither robbery nor violence.

There is no representative of the Turkish Government in Viranshahir, which is governed entirely by Ibrahim Pacha, on the whole well. For those under his rule there is protection and justice ; for the surrounding country there is neither.

I passed the night in a khan, and as the mules wanted shoeing I was forced to pass the next day there. Then my departure was further postponed by the fact that a river outside the town, which I had to cross, had grown impassable owing to rain. Consequently I had three or four days to watch the effect of the Hamidieh system, for which I was afterwards not sorry.

I have already mentioned that Mesopotamia is inhabited by two races—the pure Arabs and the Nomad Kurds. These latter were formed into irregular cavalry, on the model of the Cossacks, some ten years ago. The method of procedure was as follows : The weaker tribes were first armed, so as to neutralise the power of the stronger, and then the stronger were admitted into the organisation. For example, in this case the Melli tribe was enrolled first under Ibrahim Agha, who was subsequently raised to the rank of Pacha. This strengthened him against his neighbours the Karagetchi, whom he defeated, and who subsequently became incorporated with the Melli tribe into one regiment of the Hamidieh.

What the Sultan's object was in forming these regiments it is difficult to say. It has been suggested that they were to be a counterpoise to the Cossacks, or again that, in the event of a Turkish army advancing into Armenia to meet invading Russians, they might protect its flank against Bedawin raids should the Bedawin prove disloyal to the Sultan. Also I have heard it said the object was to secure the more efficient enrolment of all Mohammedans ; and certainly, when the inhabitants of a certain village were enrolled as Hamidieh, fifteen men turned up who had previously reported themselves dead to escape taxation. Of these conflicting theories the first has always seemed to me
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the most probable, for it must be remembered that the Hamidieh system extends throughout Kurdistan, and the advance of the Russian army would be considerably harassed by the appearance of these irregulars on their flanks.

But the effect of this organisation has been of the greatest importance in Mesopotamia. Formerly the Arabs, who, like many Semites, will not work with their hands, held the country as far north as Viranshahir. Now all is changed, and the Shammar rarely venture north of the Khabur: that is to say, that a large strip of country is open to settlers to pursue an agricultural life, and should the Baghdad Railway be made the settlers would come in from Armenia and from Kurdistan, for the superstition that the Kurds will not work has no foundation. Already, as I mentioned above, a certain start has been made. The Armenians, who, whatever their vices, are good agriculturists, cultivate the land in the immediate vicinity of the town, and in certain cases the Kurds have given up their nomad existence and have settled in villages. Of course, in other districts of Mesopotamia, in the neighbourhood of Severek, Diarbekr, and Mardin, this side of the Hamidieh system does not appear. When Ibrahim Pacha's men come to that part of the world they come as cowardly and brutal brigands.

These facts are of interest when the possibility of the Baghdad Railway, as a prosperous commercial enterprise, is being canvassed throughout Europe. The two great difficulties in the way in the conversion of this country into an agricultural paradise have always seemed to me to be the lack of labour and the lawlessness of the Kurds. Should it be found that the Kurds themselves will cultivate the ground, we have Saul among the prophets indeed, but a solution of the problem.

At last, after three days' delay, I started for Urfa. The first stage was a short one, through cultivated country, with the snow-covered mountains of Kurdistan on my right hand; after four hours I reached Gianr Hori, a small Kurdish village, where I spent the night. I found here a Christian graveyard and a stone-covered cistern in a very perfect state of preservation. During the afternoon a large caravan came past on its way
from

from Urfa to Mardin : it was under the escort of four Circassians, and had passed a ghazu of Karagetchi Kurds in safety. Its immunity was due not so much to fear of these Circassians as to the fact that they are in collusion with the Kurds, and no caravan escorted by them is touched ; thus, when the ghazu came near to the caravan the Circassians pointed out a man who had paid nothing for their protection—he was immediately robbed of his cloak and the beast he rode. Further, with regard to these Circassians, I may relate this story : At Viranshahir my Lee-Metford rifle had excited the envy of every one, and one day three Circassians came to the mule soldiers who composed my escort and said, ‘ When you have started to-morrow we are coming to attack you, as we want the beg’s rifle. You will fire at us, of course, but do not hit us, and we will give you 10*l.* if we get it.’ Unfortunately for them the sergeant replied, ‘ Come ! and when you have taken our rifles you shall take his ; but as for the matter of shooting and not hitting, this is in the hands of the “ Compassionating and Compassionate.” ’

Next day I started from Giaur Hori early, as I had a long day before me. I took all precautions against attack, keeping the mules together, and sending out scouts in front ; luckily we met no one, though we saw abundant evidence of the ghazu’s path. Here in the road were empty Martini cartridges ; in another place I found a ruined village that had been sacked the day before, and when, after ten hours’ riding, I came to Merj, the khanjee was full of stories of the previous day’s events. A ghazu of eight hundred strong (I will not answer of course for Oriental accuracy with regard to numbers—probably it consisted of eighty men) had plundered the Khan and village and taken away 5,000*l.* worth of property. Probably this last estimate is ridiculously high, but its extravagance is significant.

Of course the facts are in the highest degree discreditable to the Turkish Government—all the more so because the Hamidieh are soldiers of the Sultan, and owe their organisation and armament to him. Still I would insist that there is a side to the Hamidieh’s system which gives hope of better things, since the Hamidieh are beginning that displacement of the Arab

population which is necessary if Mesopotamia is to become a wealthy agricultural country. And if civilisation, as most people believe, depends on economic progress, there is cause for rejoicing in that the economically efficient should become politically preponderant.

Of course no one regrets more than I do the change from the simple dignified life of the nomad Arabs to the so-called civilised life, under modern conditions ; but then I am not perfectly sure that civilisation does depend on economic progress.

The country between Giaur Hori and Merj is beautiful in a wild way, the road passing between low hills, and in one place through a rocky gorge, above which stands a Roman castle.

Next morning I left my caravan and rode into Urfa, which lies under a low range of grey hills and is surrounded by cultivated land.

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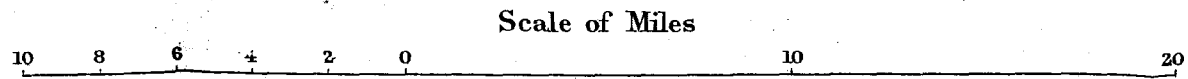
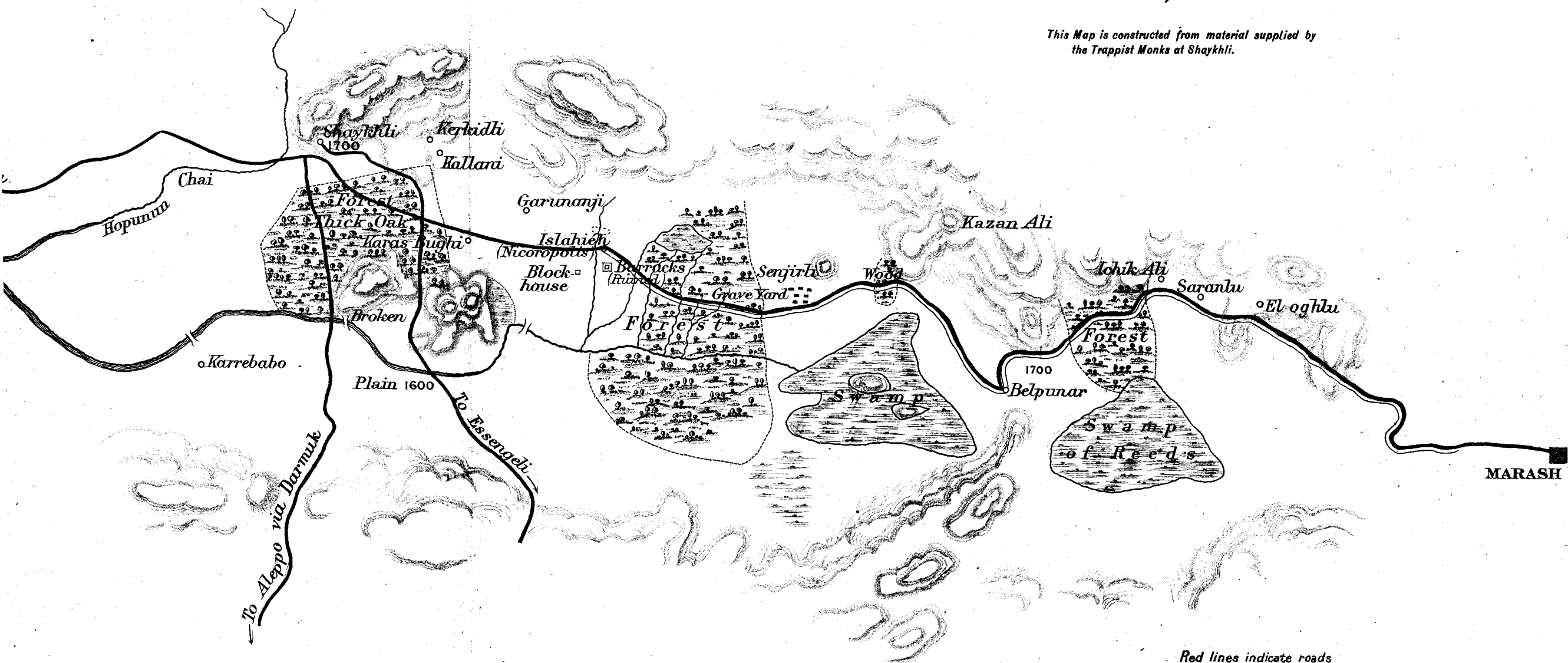
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This Map is constructed from material supplied by the Trappist Monks at Shaykhli.



Red lines indicate roads

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