Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/raaf19>

Mesopotamia, 1914-1921

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Arnold Wilson K.C.I.E., C.S.I.,
C.M.G., D.S.O.

Published online: 25 Feb 2011.

To cite this article: Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Arnold Wilson K.C.I.E., C.S.I., C.M.G.,
D.S.O. (1921) Mesopotamia, 1914-1921, Journal of The Royal Central Asian Society,
8:3, 144-161, DOI: [10.1080/03068372108724791](https://doi.org/10.1080/03068372108724791)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03068372108724791>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

MESOPOTAMIA, 1914-1921

LECTURE BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL SIR ARNOLD WILSON, K.C.I.E.,
C.S.I., C.M.G., D.S.O.

Recently Acting Civil Commissioner in Mesopotamia, and Political Resident
in the Persian Gulf, April 15, 1921

A MEETING of the Central Asian Society was held in the rooms of the Royal Society at Burlington House, London, W., on Friday, April 15, for the purpose of hearing a paper read entitled "Mesopotamia, 1914-1921," by Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Arnold Wilson, K.C.I.E., late Civil Commissioner at Baghdad. The lecture was well illustrated by photographic views, many of which were taken from the air. The Right Hon. Lord Carnock, P.C., presided.

The CHAIRMAN opened the proceedings by calling on the Hon. Secretary (Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Yate) to make a report to the meeting of the members recently admitted, and of gifts presented to the Society.

Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. YATE: I have to announce first of all that at the last meeting we elected sixteen members, among them being the late Commander-in-Chief in India, General Sir Charles Monro, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., and Grand Officer of the Legion of Honour. The present Commander-in-Chief in India, Lord Rawlinson, is also a member, and it is with pride that the Central Asian Society sees the name of Rawlinson on its books.

To-day we have elected nineteen new members: The Dowager Lady Forbes, Mr. Ian Colvin, Captain T. Denis Daly, Royal Welch Fusiliers, Mr. J. A. L. Duncan, Mrs. Duncan, Captain H. I. Lloyd, Mr. H. C. Minchin, Captain R. L. O'Connor, Sir Wilfred Peek, Bart., D.S.O., Colonel Sir W. M. Thomson, K.C.M.G., C.B., M.C., Seaforth Highlanders, the Hon. C. C. Farrer, Mr. O. Allen Harker, Mr. J. B. L. Harris, O.B.E., Mr. J. E. B. Hotson, Mr. H. J. Coleridge Mackarness, Captain J. H. Moore, Mr. H. G. Warburton, I.C.S. (ret.), Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. Tainsh, and Captain S. W. Weldon. We are specially indebted to Mrs. Waller-Sawyer for her recent success in adding new members to the roll of the Society.

I have further to announce a most generous and valuable contribution to the library which, since the commencement of the current session, we have begun to form. This contribution appeals to all of us, and especially to the older members of the Society, who knew the late Colonel Sir Henry Trotter as a traveller and able soldier and

administrator, and later as Member and Chairman of Council of the Society. Lady Trotter makes to us this gift of her husband's Asiatic library in the conviction that such a disposal of it would be entirely in harmony with what would have been his own wish. He took the keenest interest, as I and others well know, in the progress and welfare of this Society. The books which thus come into our possession are most valuable, and, indeed, form the nucleus of a library of which our Society may one day hope to be proud. The gift for which we are indebted to Sir Henry and Lady Trotter numbers from one hundred and fifty to two hundred volumes, if not more, and among them are numbered some of the really standard works on Central Asia, and all in excellent condition. (Applause.) Lady Trotter has given us a book-case capable of holding most of these volumes. The difficulty we have at this moment is, in our very limited accommodation at Grosvenor Street, to find a place to put them in; but we shall, I trust, be able to do so later. We are also indebted to Sir Percy Sykes, who has presented us with several most valuable books, including some volumes of Sir Henry Howorth's "History of the Mongols"; again, to Colonel Woolrych Perowne, who has sent us his own book entitled "Russian Hosts and English Guests in Central Asia," and a particularly interesting copy of Dr. Joseph Wolff's "A Mission to Bokhara, 1843-45," which bears the author's own autograph. I may mention, for the information of those who have not got Central Asian history at their fingers' ends, that after the grievous death of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Arthur Conolly at Bokhara, Dr. Wolff (the father of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff) went out at great risk of his own life to Bokhara and endeavoured by every possible means to ascertain the nature of their imprisonment and death. That story, one of the saddest, has never been cleared up.

The CHAIRMAN: I will now ask Sir Arnold Wilson to read the paper which he has kindly promised for to-day. During the period it covers very considerable events have occurred, and I am sure we shall all be very anxious to hear what Sir Arnold has to say in connection with them.

LECTURE.

An enterprising London paper recently offered a prize of £1,000 for the best exposition of the Einstein theory, limited to 3,000 words.

In undertaking to lecture for an hour on Mesopotamia, I have undertaken a scarcely less difficult task.

The Einstein theory is a logical deduction from ascertained facts, and from theories which have been tested by the best brains of the world. Our policy in the Middle East is exactly the opposite in every respect, and is consequently less easy to define and more difficult to understand.

In awarding the prize for the best essay on the Einstein theory, the editor was careful to explain that he was guided less by what the competitors wrote than by what they omitted; I would ask you to judge me by this test this afternoon.

From the welter of conflicting announcements, promises, and agreements which disfigure the diplomatic record of the Allies in the Middle East and have hung like a millstone round the neck of its representatives abroad, there emerged Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles, whereby we virtually undertook to create and maintain an independent Arab Government in Mesopotamia.

Neither the Versailles Treaty nor the already obsolescent Treaty of Sèvres says this in so many words, but, stripped of their internal contradictions and of their almost meaningless reserves, this is what the Treaties imply, and H.M. Government have repeatedly reaffirmed this to be our intention.

I do not propose to ask you to consider whether or not such a policy is practicable.

My object is to assist you in forming your own opinions on the problem, and to suggest ways in which the British people collectively can assist in making our present policy a success. Euclid, not content with demonstrating the truth of a proposition, was at pains to show that the converse was absurd, and for this reason I will conclude by a brief reference to the probable effect of an abandonment of the mandate or of failure on our part to give effect to it thoroughly.

POPULATION.—I will begin by describing briefly the population of Mesopotamia, according to a very rough census made in 1919.

The table on p. 147 gives the main figures in a convenient form.

It will be seen that there are a quarter of a million Kurds to consider, and nearly as many Jews and Christians.

There are more Jews in Mesopotamia than in Palestine, and they are, moreover, a more prosperous and more contented community.

Jews and Christians alike have some reason to fear that under a full-blooded Arab administration they will receive from minor Arab officials less tolerant treatment than they received from the Turks, who, whatever they did elsewhere, refrained from massacres in Mesopotamia. As in Palestine, so in Mesopotamia, it is one of our responsibilities under the mandate to provide safeguards against this tendency.

The division of Mohammedans in the above table into Shiah and Sunnis requires some explanation. This religious line of cleavage is so deep as to be almost like a racial difference in its effect. The problem of government in Mesopotamia is mainly the problem of bringing the two together. Rather more than half the rural population, nomads and cultivators alike, are Shiah. Kadhimain, Karbala, and Najaf, with an exclusively Shiah population, are the strongholds

ESTIMATED POPULATION OF MESOPOTAMIA (EXCLUDING SULAIMANIYAH).

Division.	Sunni.	Shiah.	Jewish.	Christian.	Other Religions.	Total.	Wilayat.
Baghdad ...	130,000	54,000	50,000	15,000	1,000	250,000	Baghdad 1,360,304
Samarra ...	66,455	14,215	300	—	—	80,970	
Diyalah ...	54,953	46,097	1,689	397	900	104,036	
Kut-al-Amarah ...	8,578	98,712	381	127	—	107,798	
Diwaniyah ...	1,000	192,300	6,000	5,000	200	204,500	
Shamiyah ...	445	189,000	530	20	5	190,000	
Hillah ...	15,983	155,897	1,065	27	28	173,000	
Dulaim ...	247,000	200	2,600	200	—	250,000	
	524,414	750,421	62,565	20,771	2,133	1,360,304	
Basrah ...	24,408	130,494	6,928	2,221	1,549	165,600	Basrah 785,600
Amarah ...	7,000	284,700	3,000	300	5,000	300,000	
Muntafiq ...	11,150	306,220	160	30	2,440	320,000	
	42,558	721,414	10,088	2,551	8,989	785,600	
Mosul ...	244,713	17,180	7,635	50,670	30,180	350,378	Mosul 548,378
Arbil ...	96,100	—	4,800	4,100	1,000	106,000	
Kirkuk ...	85,000	5,000	1,400	600	—	92,000	
	425,813	22,180	13,835	55,370	31,180	548,378	
Total ...	992,785	1,494,015	86,488	78,692	42,302	2,694,282	

of their faith. Samarra, though a place of pilgrimage for Shiah, is in Sunni hands, a source of constant complaint from Shiah pilgrims, who suffer many indignities at the hands of the Sunni guardians.

At Najaf and Karbala the mujtahids hold sway. They are the high-priests of the faith, in whom alone, according to Shiah law, is vested spiritual power. The chief mujtahid is the representative of God on earth; the other mujtahids are "proofs of Islam," alone empowered to give final decisions under Mohammedan law, for which reason they also claim a large measure of temporal power. Even when H.I.M. the Shah visited Karbala the chief mujtahid would not go forward to receive him, and efforts were made by a trick to induce the Shah to call on the chief mujtahid.

These mujtahids are very old men, who have seldom left the four holy cities, except, in one or two cases, to go to Mecca. They are arch-conservatives, their views and methods those of the early Middle Ages. They exercise great influence, and those whose principal concern is the maintenance of law and order may be pardoned if they reflect on the difficulties experienced, with, perhaps, less justification, by a certain English King in his dealings with Thomas à Becket.

The Shiah population is much more homogeneous than the Sunni, owing to the habit of pilgrimages to the Holy Places several times a

year. Townsmen hate to leave the towns, but the tribesmen go up often several times yearly to the Sacred Places, and are easily influenced then by extratribal agencies.

The Shiah took the lead in recent disturbances. They alone declared that the rising was a "jihad," and in their action they had the support, sometimes passive, sometimes active, of their religious leaders.

Psychologically they differ from Arabs elsewhere; gloomily they reflect on their age-long wrongs at the hands of the majority of Sunnis, and annually, in real distress of mind, they commemorate by self-inflicted blows, and even wounds, the martyrdom of their saints, Ali and Husain, who died by treachery at the hands of men of the same fickle race and faith as those who now inhabit the Euphrates Valley. "The curse of Husain is still on us," said one of them to me, as his sole explanation of certain acts of his compatriots in the recent rising.

Not for the past fifty years has the Shiah religion in Mesopotamia experienced such a revival as it has during the past three. Freed from Sunni domination, Shiah tribesmen flocked to the Holy Places in unparalleled numbers, and, forgetting what they had suffered at the hands of their former masters, turned, at a favourable moment, against their liberators, against whom, as is now generally admitted, the people at large had but one grievance—viz., that they were "Christians."

The Sunni is very different. The supreme secular and spiritual authority to him has always been vested in the State. There is no priesthood; religious officials are appointed and paid by the State, in whom vests all religious property; no man can intercede with his Maker for another; crimes cannot be condoned by the payment of money to priests or to shrines.

The difference between Sunni and Shiah is thus profound, and it extends to every activity of their lives, and it has induced an hereditary difference of outlook which it is impossible to ignore. It is from the Sunnis that the vast bulk of Government officials were drawn by the Turks, and are necessarily still drawn; it is they who fill the schools and the courts of law, as teachers and pupils, litigants and judges. The Shiah, warned by his priests that it is unlawful to serve a foreign Government, and that secular Governments, mandated or otherwise, lack Divine authority, has hitherto held aloof, and no Shiah holds high office in the present Arab Government. They are as a class peculiarly prone to be led astray by cross-currents of thought, and are in Mesopotamia, as always, promising soil for antisocial and revolutionary ideas, owing to their tendency to question the validity of secular authority.

I have not yet referred to the Kurds, of whom we have about a quarter of a million in Mesopotamia; dwellers in the hills, a few

nomadic but the great majority settled cultivators, with their own language and customs, they are members of a race which differs as much from Arabs as do the latter from Indians, and they seldom intermarry except with Persians or Turks. Representative institutions on Western lines are wholly foreign to them, as, indeed, they are to Arabs. Small isolated communities more easily fall a prey to individual tyranny than large groups, and in Kurdistan, more than in Mesopotamia, the social organization is little able to resist the tyranny of a powerful and unscrupulous individual, who, with armed men in his pay and sometimes, but not always, with the added prestige of a saintly ancestry, can force a whole countryside to do his bidding and commit atrocities as great as those of historic tyrants. For this reason Kurds, even more than Arabs, require an external Government, such as that, bad as it was, provided by the Turks.

Lastly, we have the Turkish-speaking populations of Mosul, Arbil, and Kirkuk, the offspring of early Turkish colonists and of generations of Turkish officials from Seljuk times onwards. They are a valuable element in the population. They are on the whole pro-Turkish in sympathies, as is natural, but it is to be hoped that the Arab State will be able in the future to draw extensively on them for its official needs.

PRE-WAR GOVERNMENT.—All these discordant and irreconcilable elements were loosely governed and prevented from falling into more serious and extensive forms of anarchy by the Turks—an alien Government, but Islamic in structure and in traditions, with the prestige and authority of 200 years behind it in Mesopotamia, and a continuous military record in Asia of much greater antiquity.

It was a bureaucratic Government by design and necessity (there is, indeed, no other possible form of Government for a community which has any pretence to civilization), but it was an Oriental bureaucracy. It was a national Government, but the nationality was Turkish. Turkish was the official language, and the officials were nearly all Turks. It was a bad Government from many points of view, and it was on its last legs when the war broke out; but my belief is that were a plebiscite to be taken to-day in Iraq on the issue of Turkish *v.* Arab Government there would be a large majority in favour of the return of the Turk. Black as their record is, it has already been forgotten by the crowd, in whom Arab national feeling exists, but not yet as a unifying factor.

But the Turks will not come back, and we must foster the new Arab Government, however difficult the task. When we realize the difficulties before us we shall be less disappointed at our preliminary failures.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS.—I have already shown you how the total of 2½ million population for Mesopotamia is reached. To this total may

be added another quarter of a million who reside beyond our administrative boundaries, but trade with or through Iraq.

This population of 3 millions is scattered over 125,000 square miles, but resides for the most part within ten miles of the two great rivers and their major tributaries, the Diala, the Greater and Lesser Zab, and the Gharraf, a cross-channel running from Kut to near Nasiriyah.

The country has no manufactures; its exports are agricultural and pastoral produce, the figures for 1919 being—Imports, 18 million, exports, 11 million pounds sterling.

The principal exports were—Dates, 2 million pounds; grain, $\frac{1}{4}$ million pounds; wool, $\frac{1}{4}$ million pounds; gum, carpets, etc., from Persia, $\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds sterling.

Land revenue for 1919 was, at the present price of the rupee, about 10 shillings a head, a low figure considering the high current values of agricultural produce.

The value of the dates exported from Basrah is from $1\frac{1}{2}$ million to 2 million pounds sterling annually, one-half to the United Kingdom, one-quarter to India, and one-quarter to the United States. This figure could be doubled in ten years. The water and the land are there, and for this purpose, once the canals have been made with the assistance of dredgers, labour for the rest of the work can be obtained. But we must find fresh markets for dates; we must teach the Arab to grow them better, and we must ourselves learn to pack them better. This is a great chance for British enterprise, on which those firms who have specialized in the past can concentrate with the assurance that skill and energy wisely applied will in due course bear fruit.

The average quantity of cereals exported before the war in a good year was about 100,000 tons from an annually cultivated area of about half a million acres; but it was a poor class of cereal that was exported, and had a bad name on the market—the barley because it was mixed with dirt, and the wheat because it was mixed with barley. I do not doubt that the Agricultural Department, which has already done much, could double the value of the output of existing acreage if given a free hand, by selecting the best local varieties, importing and acclimatizing others.

And we must encourage other crops. Oranges, I fear, we cannot export till the railway reaches the Persian highlands, when the two countries, whose inhabitants are fond of fruit, will exchange large quantities of fruit and vegetables. Cotton has made a very good beginning; flax has been proved to do well; the silkworm formerly flourished, and sugar-beet is a possibility. The Agricultural Department deserves all support; it is to the country's produce, animal and vegetable, what the Public Health Department is to its people.

Wool to the value of 250,000 pounds sterling is exported. This,

too, can be improved, as also hides, but the better plan will be to start a local leather and woollen industry, and I hope that this may come to pass before long.

Oil I have not referred to. There is oil in Mesopotamia, at Hit, near Mosul, and near Khaniqin: the difficulty is to get it out. It is at present almost inaccessible from the coast. A 500-mile pipe-line will be needed, and that requires stable conditions and the certainty of large amounts of oil, and these are things for which we must wait, perhaps a long time. So it will be wise for all concerned not to bank too much on oil as the solution of Mesopotamia's financial difficulties.

Mesopotamia will progress in material comfort only by the hard work of its inhabitants, wisely directed by skilled advice into channels for which international commerce will have to find outlets. Unfortunately, in this world of ours people do not work as hard as they can, but as hard as they care to, and the Mesopotamian will have to be furnished with a fresh set of ideals—he will have, in fact, to be imbued with the idea of progress—before he can be induced to work much harder or more intelligently than he does.

This, again, is one of the tasks before us as mandatory Power. British commercial enterprise must create new wants, in order that the Arab, in his desire to meet them, may voluntarily work harder and better than he does now. That way lies progress, as we conceive it.

Why not immigration? you may ask. I see no solution, but only fresh problems in such a policy. The people of Central Asia and Persia, Turkey, and Syria, will not forsake their present way of life to labour in the plains of Mesopotamia, swept in alternate seasons by bitterly cold and scorching winds. They belong to other races, and the traditions of thousands of years against such a change.

As for immigration from India, I believe that India itself offers greater attractions to the stalwart Mohammedan cultivator, who alone could make a successful settler. There is a national prejudice in the minds of Arabs in Mesopotamia, as in Palestine, against any alien who seeks to settle in his ancestral acres, and it is only the best land that would attract Indians. Immigration might have been possible before the war, but not now. There are also other objections, to which I need not allude here.

Given a large, industrious, and peaceable population, Mesopotamia could become the granary of Asia; but without law and order and communications and some measure of Western civilization the population cannot increase much beyond its present limit, which is all that the country will sustain in a state of disorder, without an organized Government, without canals, railways, hospitals, etc.

To provide these is our duty under the mandate, and we have admitted as much in the Anglo-French Declaration of November,

1918. It would have been relatively easy to do so before the war, but now it is difficult.

The great length of vital lines of communication by river, rail, and road in Mesopotamia is the bane of the soldier and a source of constant anxiety to the local Government. In 1919 we had some 900 miles of railway-line, of which 525 represented the main Basrah-Baghdad-Khaniqin line. River communications fit for cargo steamers total another 800 miles, and vital trade routes fit for lorries, connecting the main towns with rail and river, come to 1,200 miles or so. All these lines have to be protected against raiders from without and robbers from within, and this obligation is, perhaps, the heaviest that the new Government must assume; it cannot contract out of its obligations by paying "blackmail" to tribes in the form of subsidies. The ridiculously lavish scale on which we bribed tribes on the other side of Arabia with hard gold during the war has spoiled the market for many years to come.

The lesson that the Arabs and some others have learnt from the war is that violence pays, if you use enough of it, and for long enough. This doctrine accords well with what some of them believe to be the teaching of the Koran and with their national characteristics for thousands of years.

The boundaries of Mesopotamia are almost as difficult to guard as its communications. The boundary-line totals almost 2,000 miles—nowhere does it follow a natural frontier. The high hills and the stony rocks of the desert are a refuge, not an obstacle, to their inhabitants. To the forces of law and order, be they Arab or British, they form an almost impassable barrier. The aeroplane alone can and does rise triumphant to the occasion, and enables us to attack the denizens of the desert and the hills in their lairs.

To the east of us lies Persia, to the north Kurdistan, to the north-west Syria, to the west and south Arabia, each of them a historic home of disorder, each tenanted by a more virile people than are the plains of Iraq, and by people whose custom it has been from time immemorial to raid their neighbours in the plains; whereas the Mesopotamian Arab has, with rare exceptions, been content to raid his fellow-countrymen; they will seldom wander far from their beloved rivers.

NATIONAL DEFENCE.—On the question of boundaries depends that of national defence. It will be readily agreed that external armed aggression is a less serious menace to the new State than internal dissension. The smaller the country, the more dangerous are intrigues. The religious racial differences already described offer unequalled facilities to foreign intrigue to get a footing within the body politic, and the natural addiction of large sections of the people to internecine feuds makes such intrigues especially dangerous. Many

are the proverbs, which are always on the Arabs' lips, as to the addiction to intrigue of Mesopotamians.

The Turks never applied compulsory service to Mesopotamia before the war, and even during the war they applied it sparingly with a view rather to obtaining cash in lieu of service from town-dwellers than recruits. Nevertheless, they raised some 20,000 men in all from Mesopotamia. They were not good material; they deserted freely and were captured willingly. "Safely captured," one of them telegraphed his friends soon after he reached the prisoners of war camp at Basrah, and that was typical of many. The Turks would not trust the Arabs, whether Sunni or Shiah, and Shiahs in particular they distrusted.

We have reversed their policy; we have trusted our Arab levies, and we have not been disappointed. Those Arab officers who were promoted from the ranks stood firm, along with their men, against every form of religious and other argument, so long as they had with them their British officers, whom they knew and trusted; with them they fought and died.

I am sorry to say that the "Effendi," the ex-Turkish officer of Arab race, of good birth, had a much less satisfactory record than his more humble-minded compatriot.

Whilst, therefore, there is no ground to be pessimistic as to the future of the Arab Army, it is necessary to sound a note of caution. A national force cannot be created at short notice. Compulsory service may be necessary in order to obtain the number of men needed, and this may not be easily applied, even by a "national Government," and such a force may, owing to racial and religious difficulties, be a broken reed in time of internal strife.

Some external force will therefore, in my judgment, be needed for years to come to keep the Arab Government in its seat and to support its authority, and that force should, in my opinion, be mainly supplied by the R.A.F., who alone can reinforce Mesopotamia rapidly, and afford adequate support to local forces at a distance from the centre in case of need.

FOREIGN RELATIONS.—From national defence we are led by a natural sequence of thought to foreign relations. If the Arab Government is to be "independent," as the Treaty declares it to be, then it must have charge of its own foreign relations; but until it can exist without the assistance of armed force supplied by the mandatory Power, it must be content to entrust foreign relations to that mandatory Power, and it can scarcely be doubted that this is the best in the interest of peace and economy.

What will be the status of a Mesopotamian abroad? The point is of great importance, for the Mesopotamian is a great traveller. Is he to have the good offices, as of right or of courtesy, of our consulates

and embassies abroad? I hope so. It is well that those who travel—and they are an influential section of the community—should realize that the mandate has other advantages than those that appear to the eye in the country itself, but the matter will need delicate handling, particularly in Mohammedan countries.

I have, I think, said enough to show you the difficulty of the task before us—that there is a solution I do not doubt, but I fear that many blind alleys must be explored before we find a way out of the maze.

I have purposely said nothing as to the choice of a ruler for Mesopotamia, but I feel bound to record my belief that both in Syria and in Mesopotamia, and to some extent even amongst the different divisions of the people in Mesopotamia, the desire is rather for a local and indigenous Government and ruler than for a ruler, however well qualified, who is not one of themselves. If a ruler is set up, he must have force behind him, and that force for some time to come must be supplied by us.

What alternative is there to such a policy? There is now but one—namely, to abandon the mandate, and this is virtually the policy which by inference is favoured by the greater part of the English Press to-day.

What would the result be? Admittedly, I think, both in Palestine and Mesopotamia, and therefore in Syria, anarchy in the Arab-speaking countries on a scale which has not been witnessed for some centuries; and this anarchy, which would spread rapidly, would before long need greater forces to prevent its spread to India and Egypt than are now required in Mesopotamia and Palestine.

Never was there a time when the maintenance of adequate force at the disposal of the civil power was more necessary in the interest of internal and international peace than now; no easy gift of independence or autonomy or the rights of self-determination will absolve us from the necessity of maintaining force to secure peace.

No Government can be formed in the Middle East in these days without our support and assistance. Were we to abandon the mandate, the Arabic-speaking world, already suspicious, would finally, perhaps for a century, turn definitely against us, and we should deserve it. With anarchy would come loss of trade; and in a short time civilization in these regions would be submerged, as it was in the Sudan when the British Government abandoned that country in deference to much the same complaints as we hear now. We went back to the Sudan ten years or so later to find the population reduced by two-thirds by famine and the sword.

However much we may be tempted to do so, we cannot ignore the obligation that lies on us to promote civilization and progress in these lands; we cannot neglect the needs and interests of the inhabitants, who still trust us, and abandon our liabilities, holding on only to those

portions, such as Basrah, which we vainly imagine we can hold without much expense, though without honour or justification. Such a policy would sap the very foundation on which we base our claim to exercise power, and on which actually depends our ability to do so.

I assume, therefore, that Parliament will ratify the acceptance of the mandate for Mesopotamia by Great Britain; it remains for me to suggest ways in which those outside Government can help in making the mandate a success.

First and foremost I put commercial enterprise. The duty which we, above all other people, owe to Mesopotamia, as we have accepted the mandate, is to promote trade—not merely the exchange of goods, though that is in itself good, but to raise the standard of living and material comfort, to encourage the spread of education, which is possible only if the standard of living is raised, and to foster the growth of individual freedom and of aspiration to “succeed” in life which is a product of the first two. This is what we understand as civilization, and progress lies in the changes of structure in the social organism which entail such consequences; a belief in the existence of such a thing is our secular creed, and to promote it all over the world is our secular mission.*

The Oriental doubts the existence of possibility of progress, but we have, I believe, gone far towards concerting him. We must persevere. The Arab State will not for long wish to be burdened with State-managed railways and State electrical supply, which Mesopotamia now has; nor will it wish to start State woollen mills, State tanneries, and State factories. Yet all these things are essential to progress; statesmen, thinkers, and officials will labour in vain unless commerce assists in this way. We must provide public needs by commercial enterprise on a fair basis. Money thus spent will never yield a large profit, but it should be possible to secure that there will be no loss. The “profit” will simply be dividends to persons, many of them, I hope, Mesopotamians, who lend their accumulated savings to build railways and factories, and expect a return. The rate will vary as the risk, and there is some risk.

Next I would place restraint on public utterance, written or spoken—in the Lords and the Commons, in the Press and in periodicals. Our task was made far more difficult than it need have been in Mesopotamia last year by the orgy of ill-informed criticism, that poured on us from the United Kingdom, much of which was duly reproduced in the Arabic papers.

At this point, ladies and gentlemen, what I have to say diverges from my manuscript notes. When preparing this lecture I had amused myself by making some comments on this subject, which you also might have been amused to hear, but on further reflection I came

* See “The Idea of Progress.” J. B. Bury.

to the conclusion that it was incumbent upon me to practise what I preach, and that I could not suitably urge restraint in public utterances on others, and myself indulge in recrimination or repartee at the expense of those whose activities I have just deprecated, so I will pass over this subject in silence, and trust that you will realize that it is not because there is nothing to be said on the other side.

Before I leave this topic I should like to mention, in case you are not aware of it, that since the Armistice until a few weeks ago not a single newspaper has thought it worth while to depute a special correspondent to study conditions in Mesopotamia. *The Times* correspondent in the Middle East once spared us a week from the more congenial climate of Persia, but that was on his way to Teheran. If public opinion is to be guided by the Press rather than by Government, and Government has done but little to guide it, the Press have on them; it seems to me, an added obligation to explore a subject thoroughly before committing itself to an extreme view or to extreme criticism.

Ladies and gentlemen, before the discussion, which I hope will be more interesting than this lecture has been, begins, I would ask your permission to make a personal explanation regarding the motives which have induced me to apply for permission to retire, with a view to taking up employment of another, but I hope not less useful, sort in Persia, the Persian Gulf, and Mesopotamia. I should not trouble you with this statement were it not for the fact that the question of the propriety of the action I have taken has been raised in Parliament. A point of public policy is involved, and the matter is of perhaps more than personal interest.

I should like to explain that it is not the prospect of earning higher pay, but the prospect of responsible constructive work in a region to which I have devoted the best years of my life, that attracts me.

I hold that it is the duty of us all to serve civilization in general and our country in particular as best we can, and if a man believes he can do more useful work for the community in some other sphere than Government service he should be free to do so, unless for grave reasons of public policy or in a national emergency.

I believe that, owing to circumstances beyond my control, Government cannot offer me continued responsible employment of the kind for which my previous training and experience fits me, and for this reason, and for this reason only, I look elsewhere for employment. I go where I can be of most use. I hope to play a humble part in assisting in the development of these countries, by the creation of wealth, either from fresh or existing sources, which can, I believe, best be done on commercial lines by commercial firms. Governments have tried to undertake this, and have failed, because the machinery of Government has been designed for an entirely different purpose.

I go to join an all-British Company with a record of enterprise, of industry, and tenacity, of which Great Britain and Persia may well be proud. I believe that I am serving my country and the countries in which I shall be working better thus than as a Government official.

I am not ashamed of my motives, and I do not think that they will be misunderstood in the countries in which I have served.

The CHAIRMAN said the meeting would be happy to have any observations from gentlemen in the room, some of whom had considerable experience of the regions of which Sir Arnold had treated.

General Sir EDMUND BARROW, G.C.B., etc.: As the Chairman has called upon me to address a few remarks, I suppose I must comply; not that I am at all attracted by that blessed word "Mesopotamia," as it is one which has some unpleasant recollections for me, for both I and the lecturer have suffered in connection with Mesopotamia at the hands of the Press. I am sure that all here fully sympathize with him regarding the attacks that have recently been made upon him in the chief organs of this country. (Hear, hear.) I really cannot venture to address you at all on the subject of Mesopotamia, because I am perfectly certain there are other people here—I can see one or two—who have been intimately connected with the history of our operations in Mesopotamia in recent years, and they will no doubt be able to give you more interesting matter than I could possibly do, but there is one remark I would like to make. It is that the lecturer is, if he will permit me to say so, a really notable example of a great characteristic of our race. He has shown by his own actions, and by the history of the last few years, that the habit of leading and ruling—I will not say inferior races, because somebody here might be hurt by that description—but of leading and ruling people not on the same plane of civilization as ourselves with the greatest success. (Applause.) I only regret that that attribute which he possesses to such a marked degree can no longer be utilized in Government service, although he has given us in his final remarks some sound reasons for transferring his energies elsewhere. It is also a great satisfaction, it must be to all of us, to think that the present generation of young men—young administrators and soldiers—are so capable and energetic, and show by the feats they have performed that the British race has not lost the power of governing and ruling. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN said that Sir Edmund Barrow had alluded to two or three gentlemen present as being intimately acquainted with Mesopotamia. The meeting would be very happy if those gentlemen would say a few words.

Sir FREDERIC G. KENYON, K.C.B., etc.: I do not think I ought to say anything after so many eminent people have practically refused your mandate. I am the least appropriate person in the room to

speaking in general with reference to this paper. The Mesopotamia we have been hearing about this evening is the Mesopotamia of the last few years and the coming years; the Mesopotamia in which I am particularly interested is, say, two thousand to six thousand years older. (Laughter.) At the same time, it is not wholly out of place, because I should like to add to Sir Arnold Wilson's paper this, that during his service in Mesopotamia he rendered very considerable help to the service of antiquities. He realized, as some others in Mesopotamia have, and some have not, the responsibilities of, first, our army, and then our civil administration, for the care of antiquities in that province. That is the one point to which I should like to allude. There is a great deal that might be said if this were the time to say it. I should like to say that if we take up the responsibility for a country like Mesopotamia or Palestine, we assume a responsibility for its past history as well as its present and future. We have heard sometimes in the past of the difficulties of pursuing the study of history, archaeology, and antiquities in those countries under Turkish dominion. Well, it is our business now to see that conditions are made better, and that we do introduce a civilized administration of antiquities in those countries. We are responsible, as I have said, for their history, for their past as well as the present, and that is what we hope to do. When the British Army advanced up the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, we at the British Museum got permission to send out an archaeologist to be attached to the military forces, to give any advice that might be wanted with regard to the care of antiquities and the avoidance of damage to them, and, incidentally, see what possibilities there were of pursuing inquiries there. I should like to say we always had the fullest possible assistance from the army, and also from Sir Arnold Wilson when he was responsible for the civil administration; and I may say that, so far as our work was concerned, in actual investigation and excavation we achieved some very interesting results, dealing with this period of about six thousand years ago which lies at the back of the history of Mesopotamia. During the last year or two, naturally, conditions in the country have not made it possible to pursue that work; but I hope the arrangements that may now be come to for the government of Mesopotamia will allow of resumed work this next autumn, or as soon as possible after that. I want to say this: We museums are sometimes considered by individuals, even by Government departments, to be purely predatory organizations; it is supposed that our sole motive in going to a country like Mesopotamia is to take away any antiquities and treasures which belong to the natives of the country. As far as the natives are concerned—and I believe Sir Arnold Wilson will bear me out—their main wish is to be allowed to exploit and sell the antiquities. But if you are looking at the higher interest of the natives, and

the desirability of making them understand their own history and antiquities, I am quite sure there are enough antiquities in Mesopotamia to furnish every museum that may be established out there; to educate every Arab or person of other nationality in the antiquities of the country to the fullest extent to which he is capable; and, at the same time, to allow the export of antiquities to Europe and America, to allow the progress of science, the study of past history, and the advance of scholarship—and that is the enlightened way of dealing with the matter. Have a Department of Antiquities which will consider the interest of the country up to the fullest extent; keep there all that can profitably be kept there; but don't go beyond that and say nothing is to be taken away from the country. If you do you encourage smuggling, lead to the destruction of great quantities of antiquities, and obstruct the progress of science and knowledge. (Applause.) I must apologize for having taken up so much time on a subject rather alien to the main purpose of the paper. As an ordinary member of the public I thank Sir Arnold most heartily for his paper, and express the appreciation which, at any rate, some members of the British public have for the work he has done. (Applause.)

Major EDWARD WARREN, F.S.A., F.R.I.B.A.: I should like to say a word or two. When I was in Baghdad in the early days of last year, I constantly owed to Sir Arnold Wilson a debt of gratitude for his assistance, his direction as to things I wanted to see—books and information about the country. I strongly endorse what Sir Frederic Kenyon said as to the extreme desirability of local museums in Mesopotamia; but, further, as to the legalized exportation to centres of civilization like London, Paris, and New York, I thoroughly endorse what Sir Arnold said that only one-tenth or so. of the valuable, fruitful exploration and excavation possible has been undertaken in Mesopotamia. The surface has been merely scratched. Layard, Rawlinson and the Germans have left an enormous lot untouched. My avocations in Mesopotamia did not allow me very much time for research, but a good deal for observation; and I was astonished at the amount of what I seriously consider fine architecture still existing in Mesopotamia—a great deal in a ruinous condition. I trust one of the cares of the British-Arab administration of the future will be to guard the monuments of Mesopotamia from the ruin and demolition which is rapidly overtaking one after the other, sweeping away remains of such enormous interest. I take this opportunity publicly to express my gratitude to Sir Arnold Wilson for what he did at Baghdad, and for his charming lecture this afternoon.

Sir MICHAEL O'DWYER, G.C.I.E., etc.: I know little of Mesopotamia, and I would like to add my tribute of praise to the lecturer for what he has done to enlighten us on this thorny subject. A lec-

ture has been defined as excellent if it complies with the following definition: Somebody said it should be like a lady's dress, long enough to cover the subject and short enough to interest and attract. (Laughter.) I am sure everyone here will agree with me that the lecture we have just listened to has admirably fulfilled those conditions. Most of us have hitherto gathered such information as we have about Mesopotamia from the vague and conflicting accounts of certain sections of the Press; we have had very little first-hand enlightenment on the subject. At one time we were told Mesopotamia was an El Dorado, which would revive the ancient glories of Babylon and Baghdad; a few years more and the cold fit comes on, and we are told that Mesopotamia is a millstone round our necks, and that we must clear out at the first moment. Sir Arnold has indicated the *via media* which the Government should pursue; that is to say, we have taken up obligations, and it would be cowardly and mean to renounce those obligations. We have, as a mandatory Power, taken certain races under our protection; we have assumed certain obligations to civilization; and it would be unworthy of our traditions as an imperial race—particularly unworthy of our traditions in the East—now to repudiate those obligations. Speaking as one who has some knowledge of India, I know that our policy in Mesopotamia has been followed very closely by the people of India. If they see we are false to our trust there, and try to shake off the burden which we have solemnly undertaken, their opinion of us will be very considerably lowered. We cannot afford at the present day to have our prestige in the East lowered. I was therefore particularly glad to hear from Sir Arnold that he at least had not thrown off the white man's burden; that though he has renounced the service of Government, he has assumed responsibilities in Mesopotamia and the East, the discharge of which we know from his past record will confer further benefits, both on Mesopotamia, for which he has already done so much, and on the Empire of which he is so distinguished a servant. (Applause.)

The LECTURER: I have to thank Sir Michael O'Dwyer for what he said, and to say that the best proof of my confidence in Mesopotamia and the Middle East is the fact that I am prepared to assume fresh responsibilities and liabilities in the same sphere, though in a new capacity. Nowhere else would I have done so. Otherwise it might be said that I was leaving a sinking ship. Far from that, I am going back to the ship as a passenger; that is the best possible proof I can give of my confidence. As regards the remarks of Sir Edmund Barrow with regard to the quality of junior administrative officers abroad, I can say of my own officers, as was said of the Golden Bough: *Uno avulso non deficit alter aureus*.* Out of an average strength of from 100 to 200 executive officers, between thirty and forty have been

* When one was torn away, there was not lacking yet another, also gold.

killed during the last six years, or died by disease, and fifteen or sixteen were killed during the twelve months ending in September, 1920; never once did I find anything but eagerness on the part of others to take the place of those killed. No man ever left his post until he was summarily ordered to do so, or forced back by actual hostilities. On one occasion, when an aeroplane was sent to take away two officers whose lives were undoubtedly in jeopardy, I learned from the pilot, who carried a peremptory order from me to them to leave, that they spent some time discussing whether they should obey it before finally complying. That indicates their spirit.

I thank the speakers for their kind reference to myself, and you, ladies and gentlemen, for the patience with which you have listened to me.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we separate I should like your permission to pass a very hearty motion of thanks to Sir Arnold Wilson for the most interesting lecture which he has given us; also to thank him for the very beautiful photographs with which his paper was illustrated. I think we should all be grateful to those gentlemen who have kindly taken part in the all too short discussion. I had hoped we should have had one or two others here, but I suppose the Parliamentary duties of Major Ormsby Gore and others have prevented them. I hope you will allow me to convey to Sir Arnold Wilson our most sincere thanks. (Applause.)

This ended the meeting.