WILEY

Journeys in North Mesopotamia (Continued)

Author(s): Mark Sykes

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1907), pp. 384-398

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1775926>

Accessed: 26-06-2016 20:35 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Wiley, The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to The Geographical Journal

so joins the forest which goes in a belt right round the mountain. I can only corroborate, as far as we were able to see, exactly what Major Powell-Cotton has told us in regard to the natives and pygmies in the forest; and some of the things he told me when we were at Beni I was able to identify in the forest. I can only thank him for the very delightful and realistic account of the Congo forest which he has given us to-night.

MR. WOLLASTON: It is very hard to make comments on Major Powell-Cotton's most interesting paper, and I am not really entitled to do so, because I did not go through his country. He went down into the Ituri, and I went in a different direction. Mr. Carruthers and I went down by Lake Albert Edward to Lake Kero, then to Tanganyika, and on across to Kasongo, on the upper waters of the Congo. I was interested to hear Mr. Freshfield say that coming on to Lake Albert Edward was like the first view of Lake Garda, because my first view of Lake Tanganyika reminded me of Lake Maggiore. It has very much the same appearance, the same colour, and the same shape. About these okapi and the other things, I am not competent to speak. There was one thing that struck me in Major Powell-Cotton's lecture. A great many of his photographs are of Congo State posts and soldiers and officials. I know that Major Powell-Cotton visited many of the posts, and was hospitably received by them. Mr. Carruthers and I were also very hospitably received on many occasions when going down through the Congo.

MAJOR POWELL-COTTON: I do not think there have been any points raised in the very interesting discussion we have heard which require any words from me. I have collected a good deal of information about the habits of the okapi, and at some future time I may perhaps put it in a form which you can read, if you care to. I thank you very much for the very kind way in which you have listened to my brief account of my travels.

THE PRESIDENT: I think it is unnecessary for me to tell Major Powell-Cotton that he has given us great pleasure to-night. It is always easy to detect when a lecture is interesting to an audience, and we now thank him most heartily.

JOURNEYS IN NORTH MESOPOTAMIA.*

By MARK SYKES.

HAVING glanced at the general characteristics, we may now proceed to examine the Kurds in detail. All along the northern slopes of the Karaja Dagħ we have a collection of tribal and non-tribal Kurds of the lowest type and description, nomads and semi-nomads. They are all despicably cowardly, dirty, cruel, and apparently idle, and I am afraid that many travellers, generalizing from these particularly odious people, condemn the whole race, when, as a matter of fact, like the Kurds north of Lake Van, they are an exception to the rule.

Between Urfa and Birijik we find a wonderfully different people in

* Read at the Royal Geographical Society, March 11, 1907. Continued from p. 254.

the tribes of the Dinardieh and Berazieh. These are turbulent politicians, bold warriors, wealthy herdsmen, and industrious agriculturists. The Berazieh and Dinardieh, although they have adopted Arab dress in the majority of cases, are pure Kurds, and are an excellent example of what a useful economic asset the Kurd is when his energies are turned in the right direction. There are now some 360 prosperous villages in the vicinity of Seruj, and these are inhabited by people who only a comparatively few years ago were mostly dwellers in tents.

In the vicinity of Harran, there are many villages of mixed Arabs and Kurds; however, as they have practically no tribal organization and no leaders, their lot is unfortunate, but, although non-fighters like the Fellahin Arabs, they are far more industrious and persevering.

We now come to the southern slopes of the Karaja Dag. This section of the country is entirely in the hands of Ibrahim Pasha, the great Hamidieh noble and chieftain.

Ibrahim Pasha is, without a doubt, the most interesting person in the Jazirah. When he started life ten years of age, his father was a prisoner in Diabekir, and he himself a penniless refugee in Egypt. He now stands out a brigadier-general in the Turkish army, the master of fourteen thousand lancers and horsemen, the leader of twenty-two distinct tribes, and chief of the Milli Kurds. His photograph will give you some idea of the man. Ibrahim Pasha's mother was an Arab of the noblest race, his father a Kurdish chieftain of renown. In Ibrahim we find the

IBRAHIM PASHA.

JACOBITE OF TUR ABDIN.

racial characteristics of both his parents—the constructive and practical powers of the Kurd combined with the mental faculties and humanity of the Arab. Ibrahim is a man with many enemies, his position requires him to be at constant war with his neighbours, the Arab and Kurdish tribes without his confederation long to see him killed, but I have never heard any one accuse him of a disgraceful or dishonourable act. Indeed, although he has personally no bias in favour of the Armenians, he did not hesitate to threaten to destroy Suverek if they were massacred there, and so saved hundreds of lives; and when matters were at their worst at Diabekir and Urfa, he actually succoured some thousands at his headquarters at Veranshehr. For two months he fed these people for nothing, and when the troubles subsided, he gave such as chose to remain lands on which to live and work in peace. I am sure no one can grudge him the wealth which his action has brought him, and his statement that the terms he imposes on settlers in his country are not unreasonable is proved by the fact that Armenian immigrants are increasing at Veranshehr every year.

Leaving Ibrahim, his tents, and flocks behind us, and proceeding eastward, we come to the stony region of the Tur Abdin, inhabited by a peculiar population whom people usually divide into two classes—Jacobite Christians and Kurds. As far as I can ascertain—but there may be others who will correct me—the people of the Tur Abdin, both Moslem and Christian, are really of one race, and that race is Kurdish. These people are divided into several tribes; some talk Kurdish, others a bastard dialect of Arabic. But this has no bearing on their religion; in such tribes as the Christians preponderate there are Christian chiefs, in others Moslems. These tribes are singularly different from their neighbours, in that they seem to have lost the art of fighting for an indefinitely long period without any appreciable result. The men of Tur Abdin have taken of late years to killing one another off irrespective of creed, and, not content with killing, they burn and destroy each other's property in the most ruthless manner; consequently villages are growing scarce between the plain and Midiat, and until some sharp examples have been made the mischief will continue. However, north of Midiat, and until one reaches the unpleasant zone of the Diabekir plain, we find a well-populated region of passing richness. One of the tribes inhabiting it are known as the Mahalemi. These people, who speak a base Arab dialect, according to their own tradition were Christians, but became Moslems two hundred years ago because their patriarch would not grant them a dispensation to eat flesh in Lent during a year of famine. Before leaving Tur Abdin, I would draw your attention to one of the interesting monasteries which remain. In the one at Deir Amar there are some admirable mosaics; the roof is tiled after the manner of Roman buildings, and even as the modern Turkish houses in Anatolia are roofed to-day. I might add that it seems to me interesting that in the villages in which Christians preponderate the round arch is still adhered to in building, while where Moslems are in the majority it is replaced by the pointed arch.

Between the Tur Abdin and Jezire-ibn Omar we find the camping-grounds of the Miran Kurds, a tribe lately of some importance, but now waning in power and prestige.

On the northern side of the Jebel Sinjar there is a peculiar salt marsh known as the Sea of Khatunieh; in the centre of this marsh here is an island connected with *terra firma* by a causeway. On the island there is a warren-like village inhabited by Arab fellahin.

The village of Khatunieh is, I think, one of the most depressing spots I have ever visited, for its situation is gloomy and dreary beyond belief. The hills in the background are of a snuff-coloured yellow; the dull, brackish waters of the lake are darkened by rank black sedges, through which rustle an evil-smelling wind, heavy with the fume of salt marshland; while the village itself is in keeping with its surroundings, being only a collection of tumble-down huts, half built,

half dug out of the ground, more like the lairs of wild beasts

than the dwellings of human beings. Around the holes through which the inhabitants creep into these burrows, is collected the filth and rubbish of years, reeking with a sickening odour of decay. The miserable wretches who call these dens their homes are of the lowest of their race: diseased, poor, avaricious, and of such low mental calibre as to be almost half-witted. It would be hard to imagine more depressing company after a long and tedious journey. Yet they were loquacious, even beyond the wont of Arabs, and, chattering like apes, would give neither rest nor peace to me or my people until driven away by force.

Having now described the inhabitants of the western and northern portions of the Jazirah, I will now turn to those of the south-east — the devil-worshippers of the Sinjar. This singular people, whom I have been privileged to visit, I really can lay claim to know very little about. The reason, I think, will be plain if I read to you my diary.

"The next morning we set out once more for the Sinjar, and after four hours' ride at length reached the foot of the Sikeniyah pass. I always understood that the Yezidis who inhabit the mountain were a much-maligned people, groaning under a cruel oppression, and so on; brave, courteous, industrious, with an ingrained love of freedom, and possessed of all the rest of the stock-in-trade virtues. My experience, however, does not encourage me to put much faith in the theory.

"Soon after we entered the pass, we were unpleasantly surprised by seeing four men in white garments, armed with rifles, spring apparently out of the ground and brandish their weapons in a threatening

YEZIDI VILLAGE NEAR EL KHAN.

manner. An old man on a distant hill, however, shrieked out some words in a devilish tongue, and the four men vanished as quickly as they had appeared. A little further on the trick was repeated. The men were wild-looking ruffians, with a lowering look of animal ferocity in their eyes that might well give one cause to think whether one had been wise to visit this nest of Satan's brood.

"After an hour's anxious ride we reached a small encampment. Not a word of welcome was vouchsafed us. As I ate my lunch, a savage-looking man snatched the food out of my plate and wolfed it without a word. On every hill white figures flitted about, crying shrilly and pointing to my party. My escort looked doubtful and anxious. Presently a tall sombre man came up and spoke to us in Arabic. He was

No. IV.—OCTOBER, 1907.]

2 E

a shaykh. 'Go,' he said. 'I will go with you. Go on quickly; you will bring trouble to us if you stay, and trouble to yourself. Mount and be off.' We took the fellow's advice and started away, the shaykh accompanying us.

"As we passed a second encampment, a strange-looking creature came out towards us, shouting, 'Khoweh! khoweh!—Tax! tax!' He seized the bridle of one of the horses, and stopped the caravan. The people were streaming from the encampment, whistling a signal to others, who came running from the fields. 'Pay him,' said the shaykh; 'there is danger!' With great reluctance we gave the brute some money, and rode on as quickly as we could. Nor did we draw rein until we reached the camp of Khalil Agha, a chief of some note amongst these people. Khalil Agha, a man with a strange and evil countenance, received us with a chilly reserve that gave us but little encouragement after the preceding events. As I sat in the Agha's tent, scores of his white-robed henchmen came in and glared at us in grim silence. Strange-looking fellows were these Yezidis. Their features are so small and pinched that their faces have an appearance almost asp-like. Their expression is predatory and vindictive. The fact that their noses being generally neither straight nor hooked, but pointed and turned downwards, so as to press down on to the upper lip, adds to the unpleasantness of their countenance. Their voices are shrill and fierce, their manners brusque and unceremonious, their bodies are lithe, active, and wiry, and in stature they tend to be above the average. Their clothing is strange in the extreme. On the head, a tall brown conical cap, around which is wound a black or red turban; the body is swathed in a long flowing shirt of white, cut square at the neck; a short cloak of brown leather, and pointed curled-over shoes complete the costume. When I saw these curious figures around me, it seemed as if four thousand years had slipped back, and I was sitting among some forgotten primæval people, such as those who carved their barbarous monuments upon the rocks at Ivriz.

"There is an air of mystery about the Yezidis, which may well account for all the monstrous tales that are told of them. As I sat in the tent, a man in black robes entered and sat down opposite. Great reverence was paid to him, many of the men kissing the hem of his garment. What or who he was, I could not learn. Presently I left the Agha's tent and went to my own, where I found a crowd of silent men slowly and deliberately examining all my furniture, while the soldiers and muleteers sat shivering with terror at a distance. All the evening crowds of people came trooping down from the mountain to stare at my camp and swell the ill-omened crowd gathered round it. At last, with a troop of some sixty at his heels, came Shaykh Hamo, the religious chief of that region. He was of more cheerful aspect than the others, and helped to dispel the feeling of depression and helplessness that had gradually crept

over one in the course of the day. He came into my tent, and I entertained him to the best of my ability. He said that if war broke out between Persia and Turkey, the men of Sinjar would kill every Moslem within reach, a sentiment loudly applauded by the rest; indeed, the solitary yapping cry by which they marked their approbation of their pastor's speech

YEZIDI OF SIKENIYEH.

was the first sign of animation I noticed among them all that day. Shaykh Hamo then took his leave, and after his departure a good many of the others stole away towards the hills. After sunset, my host, Khalil Agha, sent down six men to look after my camp, and their repeated and earnest inquiries as to what time I usually went to sleep did nothing towards restoring my confidence. However, beyond a few stray shots fired at a distance, nothing of import occurred during the night, and the next morning we set off for the town of Sinjar.

“When the Turkish flag, which flies from the top of the hill on which the town is situated, came in sight, my muleteers began to sing for the first time since the preceding day.”

At Tel Afar we find an interesting survival in the small Turkish settlement which still remains there. These Turks, who must have settled at Tel Afar early in the twelfth century, apparently lost all connection with the other invaders, and seem to have remained independent until the days of the reforms of Sultan Mahmud. At that time they were a thriving predatory independent community. According to themselves, their history is as follows: They are escaped slaves and runagates who settled in the ruins of the ancient city of Tel Afar. They formerly lived independently in a kind of commune, and, under an elected leader, held their own against the Shammar, even when the latter levied toll on Mosul. The great strength of the men of Tel Afar lay in the large and solidly built castle, the ruins of which now cover the hill overlooking the town. However, in the days of Reshid Pasha the Turks refused to admit the rights of the Constantinople Government, which reappeared, for the first time since the days of Heraklius, in those parts early in the thirties of the nineteenth century; consequently, the independent *régime* was brought to an end and the castle laid in ruins by a military expedition.

I have, I think, now given you a rough idea of the present appearance and condition of the Northern Jazirah, for once Tel Afar is left behind we enter into the sphere of influence of Irak, which is as different a country to the Jazirah as is Castille to Normandy. Had I been reading this paper ten years ago I should have terminated here, but I feel that a question has now arisen which cannot be passed by, and that is the Bagdad railway. I will not enter into the political aspects of the case, but will try and give my unbiased opinion as to the prospects of the German venture should it once set foot in the Jazirah. In the first place, I will take in detail the difficulties with which it is expected to have to contend.

Firstly, the constant tribal warfare. Now, I have endeavoured to show how trifling an obstacle this is. At present the tribal warfare goes on because there is nothing to stop it, but, nevertheless, caravans pass to and fro from Aleppo to Mosul without being inconvenienced by it as long as they have a single soldier with them—a posse of ten soldiers can usually turn back the most ferocious war-party—and the aghnam, or sheep-tax, is collected from warlike tribes without any great difficulty; consequently we need not expect that a railway would be much inconvenienced by it. Organized opposition is impossible; the difficulties which a man like Ibrahim Pasha experiences, even with Government assistance, in keeping his tribes loyal to himself are sufficient to show how fruitless it would be for any other tribe to endeavour to prevent the railway being built.*

Secondly, the difficulty of developing a land without a sufficient

* Ibrahim himself and nearly all his allies are eager for the railway to be built. The only inhabitants of the Jazirah who are against the scheme are the Shammar of the south.

population. Here indeed is an objection which would seem more formidable; however, I am convinced it is not so terrible as might at first be supposed. I have described to you how rapidly villages have grown in the district of Seruj; I will draw your attention to an even more striking case. Any one riding over the road between Aleppo and Meskene some ten years ago would have found what was tantamount to a desert—a few ruins, some scattered encampments, and half a dozen villages would have been all that would have met his eye. Now this year I passed over that tract in March and again in October. In March I never left cultivated land until I was within three hours'

BELAD SINJAR.

ride of the Euphrates; in October I found that distance had decreased by a third; now that tract of country has been settled and cultivated by the poorer nomads who formerly lived there, by Kurds of the Berazieh and Dinardieh who had been crowded out of the Seruj district, and by Arabs from the coast and Turks from the mountains of the Taurus. The Arabs, Kurds, and Turks were rapidly amalgamating into one race, of which Arabic was the language. The problem of settlement of the desert between Aleppo and the Euphrates had been solved by natural forces; the increasing size and prosperity of Aleppo had made it necessary for the Government to bring the Bedawin under control. The moment they were checked, the poorer nomads began to cultivate, and

were immediately joined by the floating populations of Kurds and Turks. A moderate infusion of the two latter stocks in the population works wonders on the Arabs, who lose their dirty, penurious, and feckless habits, while the Kurds and Turks, by intermarriage with Arabs, grow more civilized and intelligent. Now, in the Jazirah we have already the nucleus of an agricultural population along the banks of the Belikh and Khabur in the tribes of fellahin Arabs; once they are secure from raids and have a market for their produce, they will begin to work in earnest, and they will instantly be assisted by the Kurdish immigrants who are at present earning but a very precarious existence as agriculturists among the mountains north of Urfa. We have also to count upon reinforcements from Deir Zor. Fifteen years ago Deir Zor was a small transit town, probably little more than a village; it has now, roughly, 25,000 inhabitants, mostly Kurds: of these, at least 6000 would be available for agricultural purposes. Another point I should like to make is that there are about 14,000 of the Milli and Kikieh Kurds on the slopes of the Karaja Dag, who have every intention of settling along the banks of the Jag Jag and upper reaches of the Khabur whenever the railway comes. On this point I had the following statement from the chief Agha of the Kikieh Kurds—he was at the time encamped on the banks of the Jag Jag: “Formerly we Kikieh lived here in villages in winter and tents in summer, but the Shammar destroyed our crops and drove us up to the Karaja Dag, where we live in houses in winter. However, we come here to pasture our flocks in spring, and also to show we have a right over the land. When the railway comes we shall be very rich. I shall bring all my people down here; the Government will be forced to protect them; and we may build, perhaps, five hundred villages.” And this is only one tribe among many. In the Sinjar we have a district already well cultivated, and inhabited by about 30,000 industrious people, most of whom are completely sedentary. We may also count on many of the native labourers who come to build the railway settling along it.

I think these few points tend to show that once there is rapid and commodious transit, the questions of labour and security will not present such difficulties as people might suppose. Against this, however, we must remember that the idea of European colonization is hardly one that can be entertained. On several occasions large colonies of Circassians have been introduced by the Government, and although they were good farmers, and could hold their own with ease against the Arabs, they always succumbed to the climate; in fact, the Jazirah is not a country for white men to work in. The climate in summer is terribly trying, and the autumnal Malarial fevers are extremely dangerous. Europeans, even when not leading a sedentary life, get run down and slack, and if a man is to be a pioneer agriculturalist, he cannot afford to be either.

Before closing this paper, there is one more thing to which I should like to draw attention, and that is the proposed trace of the railway. I am inclined to suggest that, after reaching Ras-el-ain, the line should then follow the Khabur on the left bank as far south as Shedadeh, and then skirt the foot of the Sinjar hills as far as Tell Afar, and afterwards resume the old proposed trace along the Tigris. My reasons for making this suggestion are as follows: (1) Once the Khabur is reached, the actual expenses of laying the line would be but slight, the physical obstacles being trifling—how slight, indeed, may be judged from the fact that in the days of the early khalifs there was a canal connecting the Wadi Serser with the Khabur, running from Tel Kokab to the southern slopes of the Sinjar; (2) that it would develop the interior waters of the Jazirah first. That the settlement of the banks of Khabur and Jaggag rivers should come first is, I submit, of primal importance. Agriculture between Baghdad and Mosul, although not very flourishing, is well under way; between Nisibin and Mosul the land is to a certain extent populated. Now, should the railway take the northern side of the Sinjar, all tendencies will be to migrate and settle northward and eastward; a branch line from Mardin to Deir would probably be under discussion for many years before it was accomplished, and during all that time the magnificent lands on the banks of the Khabur, Belikh, and Jag Jag would be lying idle. If, on the other hand, the trace I have suggested be followed, the whole trend of agricultural immigration and settlement would be diverted to its proper central channels and led away from the stony ridges of the Mardin hills, whither it has been driven by Arab incursion. Thus, if the central line is followed, we may expect with confidence to see a chain of villages and fields some 100 miles in length, where at present there are not above twenty permanent dwellings; Deir Zor would still remain a central depôt for grain as far south as Ana, and it would be connected with Shedadeh by plenty of cheap wheeled traffic.

As regards the repopulation of the tract between Ras-el-ain and Shedadeh, this would not prove so difficult as many people imagine. In the last three years 56 new villages have sprung up between Mahdum and Jubb es Sofa near Aleppo; these villages have been sufficient to set the area in which they have been built under general cultivation. Taking that district as a basis of calculation, I find that about 312 villages would have to be established along the central rivers between Shedadeh and Ras-el-Ain, a number which, according to all local authorities such as shaykhs, zaptiehs, mollahs, and so forth, could be easily provided twice over by the Baggara, Weldi, Aghedaat, Kiki, and Dinar Kurds, and Arabs, without counting the influx of people from Aleppo, Mardin, and Mosul. Once a small settled population had been established in security along the central rivers, no one acquainted with the country would doubt as to its rapid increase.

Before the paper, the PRESIDENT: I have to introduce the lecturer, Mr. Mark Sykes, but I expect that many of you already know him from his books, the first of which appeared, I think, in 1900. It was a short but interesting account, by a young traveller, of Asiatic Turkey. In 1904, after further journeys in those regions, he produced a more ambitious book full of information and with excellent maps, under the title of 'Dar el Islam.' Since then Mr. Sykes has been travelling again between the Tigris and the Euphrates, one of the most interesting regions of the world, and he will give us to-night the benefit of his further investigations. I may say that Mr. Sykes has been studying the Near East from his boyhood. I believe he was first taken into the Hauran by his father, when he was only ten years old; and, incidentally, I may mention that Sir Tatton Sykes is now celebrating his eighty-first birthday in Yokohama. In Mr. Mark Sykes we have the advantage of listening to one who has made a careful study of the various races of that part of the world, and especially of the Kurds, a most interesting people. I now invite him to read his paper.

Sir HENRY TROTTER: In the absence of more competent speakers, I shall be very happy to say a few words; but am afraid I shall have to deal with ancient history, as it is from twenty-five to thirty years ago that I lived in those parts. During the last Turko-Russian war I was attached to the Turkish army in Asia Minor, and we had a large contingent of Kurds from all parts of the country. I had a great deal to do with both Kurds and Arabs at times, and I became very friendly with some of the Kurdish chiefs. I was very glad to hear the few words said in favour of the Kurds to-night, because they generally get more kicks than halfpence. I was specially sympathetic because they were fighting for their country. They did so a little after the manner of the Arabs, and did not care much for close quarters. These Kurds are very striking fellows, and reminded me very much—especially the tribal Kurds—of the old Scottish clans. They are very feudal in their nature, and reverence their chiefs in the same way as the old Highlanders revered the head of their clan. In some respects they had the advantage of the Highlanders. The latter, when they went on raiding expeditions, always went on foot, whereas the Kurds travel on horseback. Some of the young chiefs were fine, handsome-looking fellows, but it is very curious how in old age they change; a young fellow of about eighteen or twenty will develop into a man very much like that picture we saw of Ibrahim Pasha, who is a typical chief. A rather curious incident occurred in connection with one of the friends I made there. Two years later I was going from Erzeroum to Diarbekir, and I was anxious to get there before winter. By going straight across the mountains I could arrive in nine days, whereas it took twenty-two days to go by the ordinary caravan road. I pressed the governor to give me an escort to send me across the mountains; he refused at first, but after a good deal of pertinacity on my part, he sent to the prison and took out the principal robber and introduced us, saying, "You see this gentleman safe over, and you won't go back to prison." Needless to say, I had an exciting journey, but arrived safely, and the Kurd never went back to prison. On the way I visited a Kurdish chief whose name had been prominent in some of my own reports as one of the worst oppressors of the Christians, and I had made up my mind to give this fellow a lecture. I sent word to announce my visit, and prepared a long discourse on the enormity of his ways, but on being shown into the audience chamber, we looked at each other for a moment and then rushed into each other's arms. He was one of my old Kurdish friends. Needless to say, I did not deliver the lecture as I had intended. We had a friendly talk, and I believe the result was that he did mend his ways, at any rate for a time. While at Diarbekir I visited Dara, an old Roman frontier town full of most interesting remains. It was there, I

recollect, that I first took an interest in numismatics. The Arab boys brought handfuls of copper coins. I looked at them afterwards, and I found there were better coins to be got elsewhere, and from that date I became an inveterate coin-collector. The coins of that part of the world are especially interesting. After the break up of the Khaliphate, of which the lecturer spoke, a number of princes struck coins of their own, and at the time of the Crusades these princes struck them in order to carry on commercial intercourse with the Crusaders, specially interesting as having copies of Byzantine, Roman, or Greek coins on the one side, and old Arabic inscriptions on the obverse.

Another interesting spot in Mesopotamia was the village of Tell-ermen—an Armenian colony in the great plain south of Mardin—which I believe was subsequently destroyed at the time of the Armenian massacres. At the admirably kept village school, one was much struck with the great number of languages in use in this part of the country. The instructors were highly educated Catholic Armenians, and the little children were thoroughly at home in the French, Arabic, Armenian, and Syriac languages.

General JAMES: Will you allow me to say a few words? In the years 1857 and 1858 I was attaché to the International Boundary Commission between Turkey and Russia in Asia Minor; we visited Kars, Erzerum, Bayazid, and Erivan, and lived for a good many months in both these years in the district of the Mount Ararat range. As we were there on Government service, with a very strong escort of Turkish dragoons on one side and Cossacks on the other, the nomadic tribes were very civil to us. We lived for several weeks near the Yezidi Kurds, and I suppose they were on their good behaviour as we had such a strong escort. We lived amongst them, and often dined in their tents. There was one thing they would not allow us to do, and that was to take any part in their religious ceremonies, which were supposed to be rather mysterious. They were very good fellows, and occasionally gave us roast kids for dinner; we enjoyed our sojourn amongst them very much. Instead of their appearing such arrant scoundrels as they have been represented to-night, they treated us with uncommon civility.

Miss LOWTHIAN BELL: I should rather like to know from Mr. Mark Sykes whether this route he has suggested for the Bagdad railway has been surveyed. All that country was surveyed by Baron Oppenheim. He found some extraordinarily interesting Hittite remains in the Jebel Abdul Aziz. And he certainly went to Jebel Sinjar, of which he gave me a very blood-curdling description. He must have seen that country pretty accurately; he was sent out for the principal purpose of surveying the country for the emperor, and therefore I suppose they considered the northern route easiest. I do not believe the exact route is settled. We have this line of ancient towns on the northern route, and apparently a thickly populated district, and I suppose it is still populated. I suppose that was the reason they selected that route. One other suggestion I should like to make, and that is with regard to the pictures of the mosque at Diabekir. I hope Mr. Mark Sykes, in the interest of archaeology, will have both the photographs made into slides and give them to the Hellenic Society, for they would greatly appreciate them. The mosque, I believe, is an Hellenistic ruin. I do not think the photographs he showed this evening have been published; they look very much of the same character as the well-known façade at Urfa, and therefore I suppose they are of the same date.

The PRESIDENT: In proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Sykes, I shall not interpose any remarks of my own, as I see that he is anxious to reply to the questions put to him. I ask you to join in a hearty vote of thanks to him for his excellent paper, admirably delivered. Before we separate, I must say one word. Miss Lowthian Bell has paid a very just tribute to the Society. We are

always very glad to obtain papers from ladies, and we are most anxious that they should join with us in every possible way in extending geographical knowledge. We are glad to benefit not only from their experiences in exploration, but also from their ideas on geographical science. In these modern days there is no question of excluding either their knowledge or their intelligence.

Mr. MARK SYKES: I thank you very much for the vote of thanks, and I will immediately take the various posers that have been put to me in detail. As regards the Yezidis, I was compressing my lecture as much as possible, and consequently I did not say that between Sinjar and Mosul I spent one evening with the Yezidis tribe, who were extremely kind to me. They gave me food, and entertained me very well indeed, and I was very grateful to them. At the same time, I might add that their headmen were in prison at Sinjar, and they had had an awful hiding about a fortnight before. As regards the northern route, of course, it may be—I do not say it is so—but it may be very advantageous when it is a matter of kilometrical guarantee in having a longer route. I submit that when you get so much per kilometre, it is sometimes an advantage to make your line a little longer than it need be. My idea is that the southerly course would not only be shorter, but also central; going from Rasel Ain to the end of the Sinjar, you get fairly near to the Belikh on your right, and on the left-hand side you have several rivers. You have easy lateral communications, as all that desert is open to wheel traffic, and my idea is you run your railway through the centre of the corn-growing country, and have the corn and grain and produce brought in from short distances on either side. I think that would be economic. If the railway goes northwards to Nisibin, I would say that the Kharbur valley, with all its possibilities, would lie derelict for years to come.

BATHYMETRICAL SURVEY OF THE FRESH-WATER LOCHS OF SCOTLAND.*

Under the Direction of Sir JOHN MURRAY, K.C.B., F.R.S., D.Sc., etc., and
LAURENCE PULLAR, F.R.S.E.

PART XIII.—LOCHS OF THE NESS BASIN.

SECOND PART.

THE first part of this paper, published in the July issue, dealt with the physical features of Loch Ness, and in this second part it is proposed to describe twenty-seven of the tributary lochs. The remaining five lochs will be treated of in a third part, which will also include some general notes on the temperatures and seiches observed in Loch Ness, on the deposits covering the floor of Loch Ness with chemical analyses of some selected samples, on the biology of the lochs within the Ness basin, and on the geology of the district, as well as a summary table giving particulars of all the lochs in the basin which were surveyed.

* Maps, p. 468. The admirable maps which accompany the three parts of the Ness paper (the last of the series) have been presented by Sir John Murray and Mr. Laurence Pullar, and it is thus due to their liberality that we are able to publish them free of any cost to the Society.—PRESIDENT R.G.S.