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AN OLD ROUTE TO INDIA.

At the monthly meeting of the Central Asian Society, held on the afternoon of Wednesday, March 12, 1919, under the chairmanship of Sir Thomas Holdich, a paper on "An Old Route to India" was read by Mr. Frederick D. Harford, C.V.O., F.R.G.S.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, expressed regret at the absence of the Right Hon. Lord Carnock, the President. They had met that evening, he went on to say, to hear something regarding "An Old Route to India." He thought it would not be very long before they would be asking themselves by what new route they could get to India. They would be thinking of flying there by ships in the air or perhaps by a more direct and better understood method—partly by railway and partly by motor service. They could not fail to find a discussion of the subject not only of very great interest, but of considerable importance to those in whose hands might lie the arranging of future routes to India, especially as they knew it was no uncommon circumstance for these arrangements to be left to the decision of people who knew less about the business than members of a Society like their own. He then introduced Mr. Harford.

The ancient Median road from Persia to Mesopotamia has served for countless ages as a highway for invading armies, and for the passage of caravans bringing the produce of Persia, India, and China to Baghdad, and thence across the desert to Syria, Constantinople, and the Levant. One of the chief outlets for this trade was Gaza, and in ancient days, in addition to the existing three roads running south of Gaza along the coast to Egypt, to the north to North Syria, and to the south-east to Akaba and Mecca respectively, there was one which led to the east past the historic city of Petra (south of the Dead Sea), and thence to Mesopotamia and Charax, said to be Mahammerah, now some forty-two miles inland owing to the silting up of the great rivers, whence the petroleum pipe line now runs towards Ahwaz, and another to Gerrha at the innermost recess of the Bay of Bahrein on the Persian Gulf. An extensive field of ruins found here about sixty years ago is clearly the site of Gerrha, and as this place is shown there on Ptolemy's map, this seems now beyond dispute.

Gaza was the most important centre of the Indian and South Arabian trade. Politically it depended on Egypt, which long controlled its destinies, but commercially it depended on South Arabia; and Dr. G. A. Cooke says that the chief luxuries of the ancient world—silks, precious stones, pearls, perfumes, incense, and the like—were drawn from India, China, and South Arabia, and that Rome was a large importer. After the first century, when Petra became Roman, the trade passed largely into the hands of the Palmyrene merchants. The Romans built roads everywhere in Syria, and they can be traced far across the desert by the massive milestones, many of which are still standing.

The conductors of caravans were honoured at Palmyra with pillars alongside those of royal personages in the famous colonnade there. These leaders were generally of noble birth, and on some of them the title of "Prince of the Desert" was conferred. The caravans at this time (the third century) generally went to Vologasias, a vanished city, south of Babylon, named after the Parthian Kings.

The ruins of Palmyra (Tadmor) were discovered by two British merchants of the Levant Company in 1678, but they were forced by the Arabs to leave at once. However, in 1691 the merchants returned with Mr. Halifax, the chaplain of the Company, and a report of their visit and a picture of Palmyra, as it then was, were published by the Royal Society. I show this picture on the screen, as also a picture made by Wood and Dawkins, which appears in their splendid work on Palmyra published in 1753. The reproductions of the interior decorations of the Temple of the Sun might have been designed by Robert Adam, and perhaps inspired him, as he went to Rome in that or the following year, to study Græco-Roman art.

The number of ruined towns, forts, and stone conduits for water lying south-east of Aleppo and north-east of Tadmor mentioned by the English travellers in the eighteenth century, to whom I shall allude presently, is very striking, and proves that in Roman times, and when Palmyra was at the zenith of its prosperity, those regions had a considerable resident population, which has now practically disappeared. Two of these ruined towns are described as having church spires.

Without embarking on a history of the trade between India and Europe, I may recall here that Alexander the Great led his armies to India via Persia and returned by the Indies and the Persian Gulf and Euphrates to Babylon. In order to compete with the Phœnicians, whose chief port was Tyre, he founded Alexandria on an unrivalled site, where a narrow isthmus connects Asia with Africa, with communication by sea with Europe and India. This brought wealth to Egypt under the Ptolemies, and after the death of Cleopatra the Romans took up the trade with India by the overland

caravan routes across Syria and Arabia to the Persian Gulf, via Palmyra in the north and Petra and Akaba in the south, as well as by the isthmus of Suez and the Red Sea. Mr. E. S. Bouchier, in *Syria a Roman Province*, says that from North China a special silk route, mentioned by Ptolemy, led through Turkestan to Bactria, Media, and the Euphrates. He adds that there was a great Roman road from Antioch to Chalcis (north-west of Damascus), which was described by St. Chrysostom, and formed part of the route to Babylon.

At that time the desiccation of Northern Arabia, which is estimated by present-day authorities to date from the time of Mahomet, after a terrible seven years' drought, which led to the emigration of numbers of the Arab nomad population to Tunis, had not yet occurred. Palmyra and Petra were flourishing places, numerous Roman roads ran through Syria from north to south and from west to east, khans or rest-houses were to be found at regular stages on the desert routes, and wells and drinking-places were provided and kept in order, instead of being allowed to fall to ruin, as they have done under Turkish rule, which never repairs anything on principle. The more remote caravan-routes were marked by big stones at the side, but paved roads were commoner in Syria, says Bouchier.

To illustrate these facts, I may mention that in 1909 Mr. Douglas Carruthers discovered the ruins of a large khan at Bayer, to the north-east of Maan, between the latter place and the famous oasis of Jauf, a clear proof, he thinks, that this was the old trade route from Petra (and thus from Gaza and Egypt) to the Euphrates and Persian Gulf. The old name of Jauf was Duma, and it is repeatedly mentioned in the chronicles of the Caliphs who succeeded Mahomet, in their wars of conquest in the west, as a place of great military importance.

The Romans sailed from Suez with the Etesian winds, and knew well how to make use of the monsoons so as to ensure fairly safe navigation at the proper season, bringing back the riches of the East to Europe.

After Mahomet's time came the Saracens, who in turn gave way to the Turks. In course of time the Genoese and Venetians obtained leave of the Porte to appoint Consuls in Egypt and Syria, and for some 200 years enjoyed a highly lucrative trade with India; but the discovery of the passage by the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese eventually led to the decay of this trade, a fate which was later on shared by the Levant Company, which was founded in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and in the seventeenth century was at the zenith of its prosperity.

The fact is that the Portuguese found their trade with India so lucrative that in the first half of the sixteenth century they deter-

mined to close the two principal trade routes between India and Europe. They occupied Ormuz, the Gibraltar of the Persian Gulf, and so practically closed the overland trade from Basra to the Levant; and though they failed to capture Aden they almost stopped the traffic between India and Suez by occupying Socotra and sending warships to cruise about the Strait of Babel Mandeb, while in the east they had settlements at Goa and Malacca. The result was to divert trade to the Cape route. In course of time the East India Company, with its settlements at Surat and Bombay, and Gombroon (Bender Abbas), Bushire, and Basra in the Persian Gulf, supplanted the Portuguese, and ever since it has been the policy of Great Britain not to allow a foreign Power to establish itself in that Gulf, which was policed by frigates of the East Indian Company, who also utilized this route to carry dispatches between Bombay and Basra to or from England.

Prince Lichnowsky's disclosures as to the alleged intention of Great Britain to allow a German company to construct a railway from Baghdad to Basra, and to surrender the navigation of the Tigris, hitherto the monopoly of a British company, may be mentioned here, but the result of the war has fortunately disposed of the question otherwise.

It must not be forgotten that it was not for nothing that the Turks showed such zeal for the welfare of Mesopotamia by constructing the dam designed by Sir W. Willcocks for the irrigation of a large area of incredibly rich land. This eminent engineer has pointed out that once irrigation was in action, a railway would have to be built to carry the produce, as he has laid it down as an axiom that no river can serve the double purpose of irrigation and transport. Thus the German company would have had a most lucrative traffic the moment irrigation began. It is sufficient to add that certain irrigation works were effected by our wonderful troops last year, huge crops resulted, and the railway from Baghdad to Basra is now apparently a reality, though somehow the Press seems to have overlooked this fact; but it is a British undertaking, and not German.

Since the outbreak of the war the Royal Geographical Society have compiled a splendid new map, composed of a number of large sheets on the I/M scale under the direction of the War Office, of Syria, Palestine, Northern Arabia, and Mesopotamia; and in November, 1916, I volunteered to assist in translating and making précis of the journeys of various foreign travellers, chiefly in Northern Arabia, with a view to filling up some of the many gaps in existing maps, and at the same time I undertook, at the desire of Mr. Douglas Carruthers, the well-known traveller, who was collating all such information from various sources, to do what I could in the way of research work. He especially wished to discover the journal of

Mr. Carmichael, who travelled from Aleppo to Basra, across the desert, in 1751, the route of which is shown on a map in a book by Edward Ives published in 1773. It was during a search for this journal, carried on by us for about twenty months, when it was at last found, as an appendix to vol. I. (1772 edition), *A Voyage to the E. Indies*, by John Henry Grose, that Mr. Carruthers and I were fortunate enough to unearth a number of books, MSS., and maps, which have been utilized in the production of the new map. The paper I have been asked to read to you to-day is a sort of by-product of this work, and was the subject of an article by me which appeared in the *Nineteenth Century* in July of last year. A short paper on the same subject by Mr. Carruthers and myself jointly, and a far more important paper by Mr. Carruthers, appeared in the *Journal* of the Royal Geographical Society in May and September last respectively.

This research work threw a good deal of light on the importance in old days of what was styled on Ives's map as "The Common Route of the Caravan from Aleppo to Basra" for the trade between the east and west. I will therefore mention some of the earliest travellers who have left a record of their adventurous journeys of some 760 miles through the Great Desert, keeping well to the west of the Euphrates without approaching any place that can be called a town.

In 1528, Antonio Tenreiro was sent with despatches by the Portuguese Governor of Ormuz in the Persian Gulf to Basra, and thence overland by the Great Desert to Aleppo, reaching Portugal safely. Five years previously he had travelled from Aleppo to Basra, and his description of these two journeys is the earliest known to me. In 1563, Cæsar Frederick, a Venetian, went to India via Aleppo, Baghdad, and Basra and Ormuz, and in 1569 a Venetian jeweller, Gaspar Balbi, visited Baghdad and Basra. The traveller Rauwoff, in 1574, found a pigeon post maintained by merchants trading with those two cities, and in 1606 Gaspar de Bernardino, a Friar, who travelled from Baghdad to Aleppo, mentions as a curious fact that homing pigeons were used by the caravan-bashi to report to Baghdad their progress in the desert. They were thus able to report an attack on the caravan by a hostile force, with the result that the latter was attacked and deprived of the booty. In the eighteenth century we learn from an English traveller (Mr. Beauwes) that the merchants of Aleppo let fly pigeons with a billet tied to the neck "to gain early knowledge of the arrival of trading vessels at the port of Alexandretta with European merchandise. Bernardino saw the Arch of Ctesiphon, "large enough for a ship in full sail to pass under." He was the first traveller to mention its existence.

Pedro Teixeira, in 1604, was another overland traveller who has left a record of his journey. But after Tavernier's journey from

Aleppo to Basra in 1638 (with the exception of one Richard Bell and John Campbell) I can find no record of any traveller by this route till 1745, when William Beauwes travelled from Aleppo to Basra in order to collect material for a ponderous tome published by him called *Lex Mercatoria Rediviva*, or *The Merchants' Guide*, which gives many details of caravans and of the goods carried by them in Syria, Arabia, and Persia. Mr. William Foster, of the India Office, discovered a journal of this journey among the Orme MSS. there.

John Newberry, one of the pioneers of the Levant Company, was the first Englishman to travel from Aleppo to the Gulf of Persia—namely, in 1580. In 1588, when Queen Elizabeth granted the first charter to the Company, John Newberry, Ralph Fitch, John Eldred, "and other honest merchants" proceeded overland to Basra. They sailed from England for the Levant on the *Tiger*, and this event is recorded by Hakluyt and also referred to by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, where one of the witches says "Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master of the *Tiger*." Othello, too, just before he stabs himself, recalls how "in Aleppo once" he killed a Turk "who beat a Venetian and traduced the State"—an allusion to the trade of Venice with Syria. Eldred remained for a time at Basra to trade, while the other merchants sailed down the Persian Gulf to Ormuz, where they were promptly arrested as spies (at the instigation of Venetian traders, they believed) and sent to the Portuguese settlement at Goa, where they were imprisoned for a time. It is obvious that the Venetians and Portuguese feared that their trade monopoly with the East was likely to be endangered, and subsequent history has shown that they had good grounds for their fears.

John Eldred's venture prospered so well that in five years he returned home with other merchants from Tripoli in Syria in the *Hercules*, "the richest ship of English merchant's goods that ever was known to come into the realm," says Hakluyt. He was thus able to buy an estate near Bury St. Edmunds and build Old Saxham Hall, popularly called "Nutmeg Hall," from the source of its owner's wealth. This estate was recently advertised for sale, but the original Hall was burnt down.

Early in the seventeenth century the Italian Pietro della Valle* and the French traveller Tavernier went overland to Basra, and in the Finch MSS. recently published there is a letter from the English Consul at Aleppo complaining that he had entrusted important despatches to "one Taverneer" for the President at Surat, but that through knavery or negligence on the part of the traveller they had fallen into the hands of the Dutch. With the latter nation, of course, trade jealousy was very strong, and for a long time the Dutch kept to themselves as far as they could the sources of their very profitable

* Della Valle also describes the Arch of Ctesiphon.

trade with the East. There is no doubt that the Arabs in the same way made a mystery of the source of many of the products of the East which were carried by caravan across Arabia to Egypt and the Mediterranean.

From the middle of the eighteenth century to the turn of the last century a considerable number of Englishmen (most of them in the service of the East India Company) utilized the overland routes by Aleppo and Basra as an alternative to the voyage by sea, which was limited by the monsoons to a certain part of the year, in those days of sailing vessels. Bartholomew Plaisted, Carmichael, General Sir Eyre Coote, James Capper, Eyles Irwin, Julius Griffiths, and Major John Taylor, and two Frenchmen, G. A. Olivier and Louis Jacques Rousseau, are some of those who left journals of their journeys.

In the recently published *Memoirs of William Hickey*, allusion is made in the first two volumes to three gentlemen who travelled overland, about 1760, by this route at different times, going to or from India, and it is there noted as then little used by Europeans. One of them was murdered for the sake of the diamonds he was carrying.

In the last 110 years no traveller seems to have used this route, and its disuse as a caravan route is attributed to its unsafe nature, due to factions among the nomad tribes in the desert, and also to the hostility of the Turkish Pasha at Baghdad to caravans passing direct across the desert to Aleppo, which deprived him of the tribute he levied on all caravans which passed by way of Baghdad.

One of the most notable features on this desert route is the splendid Sassanian Castle or Palace of Ukheidir, which stands alone in the desert a little to the west of Kerbela, which was visited by Massignon in 1907 and Miss Gertrude Lowthian Bell in 1909. The latter quotes a statement in a book by Carsten Niebuhr, published in 1778, that a place answering to this description was mentioned in the journal of an Englishman. Evidently she was unaware that she could have found first-hand information about this Castle in several of the journals I have cited above, such as Della Valle, Carmichael, and Rousseau. In the *Dictionary of National Biography* it is stated that General Sir Eyre Coote "came back to England by the overland route through Egypt, which he was one of the first to adopt, in October, 1770." The writer, knowing that Coote travelled overland, evidently took it for granted that he went via Suez, whereas Irwin mentions in his journal that he had the very same guide that travelled with Coote from Basra to Aleppo; and a further proof is the mention, in the *Journal of a Tour to Hebrides in 1773*, of a conversation between Dr. Johnson and this famous Anglo-Indian General, who had just returned from India "through the deserts of Arabia." The diary of this journey was published in 1860 in the *Journal of the Royal*

Geographical Society, but the date of the journey is there wrongly given as 1780 instead of January, 1771.

I mention these facts to show how little this overland route and the fairly extensive literature on the subject is apparently known, even to those who are specially interested in the history and geography of Arabia and Syria.

On Major James Rennell's maps of Western Asia the routes of a number of travellers who had traversed the desert from Basra to Aleppo or from Baghdad to Aleppo in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are to be found, and all but one of their journals—that of Holford—were eventually unearthed either at the British Museum or in the Orme Collection of MSS., thanks to the help of Mr. William Foster of the India Office.

As most of these travellers were in the service of the East India Company, I was led to consult the Bombay Factory Records at the India Office, and found therein many proofs of the extent to which this overland route was used for the conveyance of despatches and mails between India and England, especially in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Apart from these old authorities, I have not found any reference thereto in books published in the last hundred years or so, except by Colonel Chesney, of the Euphrates Valley expedition, and Mr. Barker, who wrote the biography of his father, the famous Consul-General at Aleppo and elsewhere in the first half of the nineteenth century.

As regard the political use of the overland route, the Finch MSS. recently published show that so far back as 1665 the English Consul at Aleppo used to send despatches and parcels by express messenger to Basra for transmission to India by the intermediary of the Latin Fathers at Baghdad and Basra. In this year we find the Earl of Winchelsea writing to Sir George Oxenden, President of Surat, as follows: "Amongst other curiosities of the East Indies I have a particular liking for that drinke which they call tea, and therefore I beg you to doe me the favour to send me by the caravans which come to Aleppo . . . a provision for 2 years, with the best receipt how to make it, and with the vessels to make it and drinke it in, and a silver cup after the Chinese manner, with woode in the middle." No doubt the records of the Levant Company, which are hidden away at the Record Office, will some day be published, and properly edited should be of great interest. I commend this project to anyone who has the skill and leisure to do it. The Levant Company (also called the Turkey Trade Company) appointed the Ambassador at Constantinople, and Consuls at Aleppo, Smyrna and Iskanderun; but foreign Ambassadors at Constantinople had to put up with incredible indignities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and Edward Barton, Queen Elizabeth's second Ambassador, was poisoned by the

Turkish nobles, who feared the Grand Signor might become a Christian (see the Historical MSS. Reports). When France went to war with Turkey in 1798, the aged French Ambassador was shut up in a fortress for three years. Colonel Taylor, writing in 1790, thought that the existence of the Turkish Empire was not necessary to Great Britain, "as the Arabs are the natural guardians of those countries, provinces, and seas which divide Europe from an immediate connection with India." This dictum is of special interest now that the future of Arabia is to be decided, and that the Hedjaz forces have rendered us such valuable services in the war.

The diary of the Rev. Henry Teonge, Chaplain R.N., who visited Aleppo in 1676 with a squadron of H.M. ships which had called at Iskanderun while searching for Barbary pirates, gives a graphic picture of the life led by the wealthy merchants of the Levant Company at Aleppo. The Consul gave him a breakfast, when thirty-six dishes were placed on the table at once in three rows. Then on Saturdays they rode out with about forty of the English "to a river valley to recreate themselves. A princely tent was pitched, and they went in for duck hunting, fishing, shooting, hand-ball, cricket, and scrofilo; and then a noble dinner brought thither, with all sorts of wines, punch, and lemonade." Richard Bell, who visited Aleppo in 1669, speaks of coursing and hare hunting and wild boar hunting. The master fined all who did not observe order in the field. Turks, French, and Dutch took part in the sport. It was a proverb at that time that the Levant merchants sent their partners to Aleppo and their clerks to Constantinople, and the old cemetery at Aleppo contains the graves of many English merchants who succumbed to its deadly fevers and other ills at this time. In its palmy days the British factory at Aleppo comprised no less than eighty firms; in 1795 there were only four British firms there.

The commercial value in old days of the Basra-Aleppo route is shown by the fact that even in 1751 the caravan by which Carmichael travelled carried £250,000 worth of merchandise; at this period, too, caravans of young camels for sale used to be sent via Basra to Aleppo, and Plaisted mentions in 1757 that with the loaded camels a total of 5,000 camels was made up when he travelled. The pace of a loaded camel is almost exactly two and a half miles an hour, so that it is used as the unit in computing distances in the desert—a "camel-hour" it is called by some travellers. A small caravan took about twenty-five days, and a large caravan about forty-five days, to go from Basra to Aleppo.

The birth of Islam in the seventh century led to thousands of pilgrims annually visiting Mecca and Medina, and a number of pilgrim roads leading to those holy cities arose in consequence; some of them still exist, others have been superseded. The chief roads ran

to Egypt, Damascus, Baghdad, Basra, Kufa (near Meshed Ali, or Nedjef), and Wasit, south of Kut-el-Amara. The Persian Haj or Darb Zobeida leading from Mecca to Nedjef still exists. Long before Mahomet's time, however, Mecca was a heathen shrine resorted to by pilgrims, and a famous mart. It was, in fact, a city of merchants as well as a holy city, commanding two great trade routes between the lowlands and inner Arabia, the chief goal of caravans being Syria and especially Gaza, and through Djeddah trade was carried on with Abyssinia by sea. This mercantile character has been preserved by Mecca, and large markets are held during the pilgrim season. Beauwès spoke in 1745 of the immense riches brought there by five different caravans.

The Bombay Factory Records show that during the latter half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century there was a regular service of express couriers called Tatars, or "Life or Death" Tatars, says Chesney, conveying despatches to and from India via Basra. They travelled night and day, generally alone, and Mr. Manesty, the Resident at Basra, informed his Directors in 1799 that he had lately received despatches by them from Aleppo in thirteen to fifteen days, adding that a good Tatar would pass from Aleppo to Constantinople in eight or ten days. Thence the despatches were sent overland via Vienna, and during the French war to Hamburg and Yarmouth, instead of via Calais, Ostend, or Harwich; fast vessels carried the mails between Basra and Bombay. Some of the private travellers went from Aleppo to Iskanderun, and thence by sea to Venice or Genoa, and then overland to a Channel port.

Mr. E. E. Barker in his biography of his father, who was Consul at Aleppo from 1799 for many years, relates how, during the war with France and Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt and Syria, the official correspondence with Admiral Sir Sidney Smith could only be sent by this route, as the Mediterranean was unsafe. This route was also of vital importance during the campaign against Tippoo Sahib in 1799, as the French had occupied Suez. When Napoleon escaped from Elba in 1815, Mr. Barker was able to send early news of this dramatic event to India in the same way. He had learnt it from a newspaper which arrived at Latakia in six days from Genoa.

Warren Hastings, when Governor-General of Bengal, opened negotiations with the Beys of Egypt in 1774 for the passage of despatches via Suez to and from India, and in 1775 the East India Company appointed an agent at Cairo. Colonel John Taylor states that it was despatches sent via Suez that led to the fall of Pondicherry and the principal French settlements in India in 1778, before the latter were prepared or had any knowledge of the war. However, the East India Company succeeded in having an Act of

Parliament passed prohibiting British subjects from exporting produce from India via Suez after April 5, 1782, fearing their trade monopoly by the sea route might suffer. Another reason was the hostility of the Shereef of Mecca, who feared to lose the dues levied by him on ships that called at Jeddah, and induced the Grand Signor to put pressure on England to stop any trade via Suez, under pain of confiscation of the cargo and other penalties. It was also feared that the English would make maps of Egypt, and return and conquer it as they had conquered India. All this is set forth in a Firman quoted by Brissot, a French writer. Not knowing of this Firman, some English merchants going from Suez to Cairo were soon after despoiled and murdered.

The genesis of the Suez route to India is thus described by the traveller Karsten Niebuhr, father of the historian. Mr. Holford, an experienced mariner living at Bombay, obtained from a friend there a copy of a chart of the Arabian coast of the Red Sea made by Niebuhr in 1762. This gave him the idea of sailing direct to Suez, which he had often threatened the Jeddah authorities he would do, owing to the exactions placed on British ships which visited Jeddah. The Turks and Arabs, who never sailed out of sight of land, thought this was impossible, considering it the most dangerous navigation in the world. However, in 1773 Mr. Holford conducted the first English ship to Suez. The result was that prices for India goods fell so much through all the Levant that the East India Company could not afford to send them from London to the Levant, so they prohibited their Factors from trading on their own account, which they had hitherto been allowed to do. In 1774 other ships went to Suez, and in 1776 five ships sailed direct from India; and Niebuhr says when important events occurred, couriers were sent with despatches by this route. The Mr. Holford named above is probably the person whose route is shown on Rennell's map as having travelled from Aleppo to Baghdad in 1780. His journal I cannot discover.

The despatches of the British Factors or Residents in the Persian Gulf among the Bombay Factory Records at the India Office are a strange mixture of high politics and commerce. In the same despatch, Mr. Manesty, in 1799, would report the receipt of despatches from England and India, the arrival of warships from Bombay, the prices of goods he was dealing with on behalf of the East India Company, how he proposed to send a courier direct by the desert to Aleppo and also via Baghdad to Aleppo, to see which was the quickest route. He used to send duplicate despatches at short intervals, but he found that the first messenger merely waited for the second to catch him up, so that plan was abandoned. He would report how the Kia Pasha of Baghdad, when making an expedition in 1798-99 against the Wahabis, who occupied the oasis of

Hesa and Dereyah, asked him to secure the benevolent neutrality of the Sultans of Oman and Muscat, thus showing the extent of British influence in the Persian Gulf. Mr. Manesty would also report how he had intercepted the letters of French emissaries to Indian potentates, and how on several occasions he had actually seized these emissaries on vessels in the Gulf, and removed their papers by force from their disguised bearers. Mr. Manesty was on such good terms with the Bedouin tribes that he reported once that if the plague came to Basra he would go into the desert and stay with the Muntefik Sheikh. This same Sheikh in 1800 carried his despatches from Basra right across Arabia to Jeddah. Mr. Manesty was able to boast that his despatches sent by the desert routes had never been lost, and that when one of his couriers was robbed of them, they were recovered, and the thief's head was cut off as a mark of good faith.

All travellers admit the good faith of the Bedouin towards travellers under their protection, and it was the custom for the caravans to take with them a *Rafik*, or representative of every tribe on the route, and pay a tribute; then the caravan was safe. The Arabs of Mesopotamia have, however, nothing of the "noble savage" about them; and Balbi, travelling from Baghdad to Basra in 1580, says he met "many lions and Arab thieves" on the journey. This bad reputation they still maintain.

In recent times there was an express mail service between the British Consulates at Damascus and Baghdad, and the Turks later on had a similar postal service. From the description of the route by travellers it seems quite feasible to go by automobile from Damascus to the Euphrates—water, too, is found here at no great depth apparently—and indeed a very large area of the Syrian and Arabian deserts has a hard surface; but the two Nefûd deserts, which are of drifting sands, would be impassable. It will now be possible, therefore, for future travellers to explore many quite unknown districts of Arabia, as there are said to be the remains of many old cities in Southern Arabia north of Hadramut, which no European has hitherto been able to visit. The automobile and the aeroplane will open up vast possibilities of exploration in this land of mystery.

Colonel Taylor states that in 1790, a year after his journey from Aleppo to Basra, he reported to the Governor of Bombay on the great advantage of the Suez route over the former route in point of time. He proves this in his book by a number of itineraries from India to England. However, I believe it was not until 1837, on the introduction of steam navigation, that the Suez route was finally adopted, after Colonel Chesney had reported favourably on the possibility of a scheme for utilizing the Euphrates for steam navigation along a large portion of its course. This scheme, however, came to naught, to the great disappointment of this intrepid explorer, as did

the scheme in 1856 for the Euphrates Valley Railway, which would have been a sort of Baghdad Railway from Tripoli to Basra. Chesney had reported on the feasibility of a Suez Canal before he studied the Euphrates route, and, by the irony of fate, it was his report which induced M. de Lesseps (who was not an engineer) to take up the Canal project many years later, which has influenced the development of our Empire so vastly. The chief opposition to the Euphrates Valley Railway came from Napoleon III., who in 1869 opened the Canal to irrigation. The medal commemorating this event bears the legend "L'épargne française prépare la paix du monde." However, next year the Franco-German war broke out.

Beauwes, who visited Basra in 1745, wrote: "The English and the Dutch make a considerable figure here, they having their factories here, and despatch their letters by land, which is done by way of Damascus and Aleppo. The caravan of Bassorah is one of those that carry to Bender Abbazi (Gombroon) a part of those rich goods with which that trade is supported, and the same caravan brings back on its return the products of India, China, Japan, and Europe, of which Bender is the depository, staple, and storehouse for Persia and the three Arabias." He also speaks of the Persians who passed Basra on their pilgrimage to Mecca, and sell goods which they bring in their little caravans going and coming.

Of the trade of Bender Abbas, Beauwes wrote in 1745: "Divers caravans of merchants are seen coming in from Ispahan, Basra, Laor, Aleppo, Baghdad, Herat, Shiraz, and the Levant, with gold and silver stuffs, velvets, taffeties, porcellain, feathers, morocco leather, wool brocades, carpets, Turkey camblets and other slighter ones from Arabia, dragon's blood, manna, myrrh, incense, raisins, dates, Barcun horses, but particularly raw silk (which is the greatest article in the Persian trade), turquoises, and pearls."

The same writer alludes to the caravans from Aleppo and Suez, which joined forces en route, and went to Mocha in South-West Arabia; the merchandise carried included merceries from Nuremberg, and Hungarian, Venetian, and Moorish gold ducats and dollars. On the return journey, all kinds of medicinal and odoriferous plants, and, above all, coffee.

However, from a paper read by Lt.-Colonel G. S. F. Napier before the Royal Geographical Society in November last, it seems certain that motor roads are to replace caravan routes both in Northern and Southern Persia. He himself had been by motor from Baku to Baghdad, and a railway is being rapidly made from Baghdad to Khanikin on the Persian frontier, where the motor road would begin. Colonel Napier said that Sir Percy Sykes was doing much to improve the roads in South Persia, which were much worse than those of Northern Persia. Cars had travelled from Quetta to Kerman and

thence to Shiraz. A practical motor road had been surveyed between Bender Abbas and Shiraz, and should now be an accomplished fact. Both in Northern and Southern Persia, with the great supplies of petrol at Ahwaz and Baku and the Pipe Line in Southern Persia, motor transport is simplified and cheapened, and is likely to be a far more paying affair than a railway in hilly and remote districts, and a dangerous rival to the caravan, which, however, will probably always be found indispensable in certain regions of the East. Motor roads will anyhow be invaluable as feeders to railways in Persia.

In conclusion, I must allude to the recent flights by large British aeroplanes from Cairo to India, one of which followed an old caravan route by flying from Damascus to the Euphrates and Baghdad via Tadmor.

The Engineering Supplement of *The Times* for February describes a scheme, of which Mr. Gustave Defosse is the author, for a Ship-canal starting from Suedia, the ancient Seleucia, ascending the Nahr-el-Asi (the Orontes) towards Antioch, and thence via Aleppo to Kalat Balis on the Euphrates. The total length from Suedia to Fao, at the mouth of the Shat-el-Arab, would be about 969 miles. It must be remembered that Aleppo is 1,100 feet above sea-level, and in view of the very high cost of such a scheme it is probable that a railway running from west to east, connecting Damascus with the Euphrates and another linking up the Egyptian railway system with Basra, are far more promising propositions. Hitherto the Bedouin tribes have been opposed to railway development, which is one reason why the Hedjaz railway has not yet been extended from Medina to Mecca, though it has been surveyed, following very closely the old caravan route. The Bedouin do not relish the idea of losing the tribute which from time immemorial they have levied on caravans that pass through their territory.

These, then, are the latest forms of locomotion which may be destined to supplant the old-time caravan in the Arabian Peninsula and in the East generally in the near future.

The CHAIRMAN remarked that the paper was so full of geographical and historical references that it afforded many points for useful and interesting discussion. A great deal of it recalled the ancient routes across Arabia from Aleppo, or Syria, to Baghdad; from Syria to Bushire on the Persian Gulf; or from Syria to Muscat, at one time the chief centre of the Arabian trade. They had but little conception of the amount of commercial traffic which those routes carried in the days of Arab ascendancy—days to which they could hardly conveniently look back because they were so remote, and the history regarding them was so exceedingly vague. A book had lately been published by Colonel Miles, who had lived for some time at Muscat,

at Basra, and at Baghdad. Colonel Miles was thoroughly saturated with the traditions of the East and with Oriental literature generally. From reading his book, which was entitled *The Countries and the Peoples of the Persian Gulf*, he had, for the first time, arrived at some idea of the greatness of Arabia in the days of her ascendancy both by land and sea, when all the commerce of Asia was under her control, and she had complete command of the sea from the Persian Gulf to the Indian coast. She was then by far the most powerful nationality, as her people were the most wealthy on the face of the earth. He thought it was somewhat a matter of pride to us, or it ought to be, that there is a prospect of at least some of her former power and independence being restored to her through British intervention and influence. As regards routes across Arabia to India, he confessed he did not think any of those which had been suggested or mentioned as being possible would materialize or come into use in the near future. If in order to reach India they had to pass overland through Persia, they would have to adopt the Northern system of railways connecting up with the Russian system, which now had its terminus at Tabriz or Teheran. From Teheran the railway may eventually be carried across Persia either on a Northern line near the Elburz Mountains towards Herat or southward first of all into Central Persia and thence eastwards towards India; or by a third route, which he regarded as hardly practicable, one which kept to the coast. They must remember that the Arabs, when they wanted to reach India, carried on their trade by sea. It was only because they had the command of the sea that they were able to trade with India. Their trade route was principally from Muscat to Charbar on the Makran coast of Baluchistan, which was an Arab colony the same as Gwadar, further east. Charbar was the point at which the first of our seaplanes that made the flight to Delhi from Egypt rested en route. It is a station on the Indo-Persian telegraph line. At Charbar the influence of the south-west monsoon begins to fade away, so that whilst the monsoon winds carried the traders conveniently to that point, they afterwards adopted a land route and followed the Makran coast to the north-east corner of the Arabian Sea, and then turned southward to Sind. It had always seemed to him that those who were more or less cultivating the idea of overland routes to India were a little bit hazy in their minds on the point as to how they were to cross the frontiers of India. There was one historic way from the far north which Alexander the Great followed, but that way was entirely out of the question. He referred to the passes of the Hindu Kush. All mediæval routes centred on the north-west corner of India. This appeared to have formed the one great gateway into India, the one which, through all time, had proved to be the most easy of access, and, as regarded Asia, the most vulnerable. That was

the route by which the Arabs conquered Sind and held the whole of the Indus Valley. That, he could not help thinking, would be the necessary objective in any line that might now be contemplated to India. The Arabs very carefully avoided any contact with what they might call the independent tribes of our Indian frontier. They never meddled with them at all. Neither did the Greeks ever meddle with them. Indeed, we were really the first people who had dived into the recesses of the frontier hills and instituted anything like a reasonable and sound administration of their country. It might, perhaps, be said, Why should not the line go through Persia to Quetta? That, of course, was matter for discussion. For his own part, he thought the connection between Quetta and the Indus Valley was a weak one, and that a better, a stronger route into India could be found further west of Quetta and nearer the coast. That also was a point which was quite open for discussion. He should like to ask some gentlemen present interested in the Indian frontier to express their views on the subject.

Sir FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND said he had been extremely interested in the paper, for it renewed their knowledge of Arabia and convinced them of the magnificent country it was in the olden days, and how very much the caravan routes to India used to be utilized. The paper had also opened up visions for the future, and it was about this aspect which they should be chiefly concerned. He thought the lecturer had said that the domination of the Arab in the old days was preferred to that of the Turk in more recent times. Now that the Turkish domination had been done away with, they had to deal with the Arabs alone. From all the accounts which had reached us they were an exceedingly intelligent race, of whom it was possible to make something. If they looked at the map of Asia and of Africa, they would see what a very important point was that about the Suez Canal, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine. They would see how these formed, as it were, the strategic centre of our Empire, from which the routes to India, to Australia, and to East Africa radiate. And from there, from Palestine and Syria, would radiate the new route to India across the desert of Arabia. The lecturer had said a good deal about the route from Damascus to the Euphrates Valley, and he did not know if he could give them any more information about it. If he could it would be most welcome. He was talking to an officer who had recently returned from that part of the world, and who informed him that he did not think that what is marked on our maps as desert is really quite so desert as it is made to appear. He was informed by the officer, though perhaps the lecturer might have more information, that the part between Damascus and Hit on the Euphrates is capable of a great deal more cultivation than it is being put to at the present time. Probably it was more populated in the old days than

it is now. In that case it might be possible to make a railway from Damascus to the Euphrates Valley. A strong railway had already been made from Basra. I think it is a metre gauge railway from Basra to Baghdad.

Colonel A. C. YATE: The latest information, I think, is that the railway stops at Amára and is again recommenced at Kut-el-Amára, the piece in between being linked up by river navigation.

Sir FRANCIS YOUNGHUSBAND thought the connection did not get through to Kut, but went up the Euphrates Valley and then across to Baghdad. Then came the question whether, and if so, how, Mesopotamia should be connected with India by rail. The Chairman had said that the railway connection between Arabia and India would possibly pass through North Persia. Perhaps Mesopotamia would like to be linked up with India, and he dared say Sir Percy Sykes would be able to tell them of the possibility of connecting Basra with India through Southern Persia. The last lecture they had in that room described how the Nushki Railway had been extended to the Persian border, and as it did not seem to be anything so very great, it might be possible to construct a railway to connect up the extremity of the Baluchistan Railway with Mesopotamia. Then, of course, came in the question of the use of motor cars. This was exceedingly interesting, and the accounts that were received of the uses to which motor cars had been put afforded ample scope for speculation as to the extent to which they would be utilized in the development of new and hitherto unthought-of routes. It aroused wonder to hear of the way in which officers at Mesopotamia had been engaged in expeditions by motor car from Mesopotamia right up to Baku. Then they had heard of motors being used in the desert. The latest information opened up the prospect of a great revolution in our ideas of transport across the desert. Thus, motors, combined with seaplanes, aeroplanes, and other mechanical contrivances, added greatly to the facilities by which they would be able to survey regions and areas which had hitherto been unexplored, and which might, after being properly reconnoitred, be found adaptable for the construction of railways and other lines of transit. Observers who travelled to and from these regions might be able to open up negotiations and engage in friendly intercourse with the chiefs of the tribes through whose province new lines of communication might be opened. By means of motor cars, seaplanes, aeroplanes, and all the other of the modern mechanical means of transit, he certainly thought that in a very short time we should have through communication between the Mediterranean Sea and India, and that by these means India would be very much more closely connected with Europe than she had been in the past. The whole subject was important from whatever point of view it was considered, and he

hoped that under the auspices of the Society they would have many more illustrated lectures of a kind similar to the one to which they had listened. The subject and the great possibilities it involved ought to be brought more prominently before the public.

Colonel A. C. YATE said he was afraid the country described by the lecturer was one of which he had no personal knowledge. He was thinking that perhaps in view of the importance of the railway route which would lead from Constantinople across Asia Minor and beyond—the well-known route of the Baghdad Railway, which would no doubt, *en passant*, be linked up with the port of Alexandretta—they might consider for a moment the position of Cyprus, which of late had been very much discussed. As they were aware, the Greeks had set their eyes with great affection upon Cyprus. He gathered from a letter he had received from a very well-known member of the Society—he would not mention the writer's name, as the letter was marked "private"—that the question merited more serious attention than it is receiving in this country. Venezélean eloquence, as they learned from the newspapers, was having a very great effect upon the Peace Conference. Personally, he did not himself feel such a very strong sympathy with the claims of the Greeks. He regarded Cyprus as of such importance to this country that he did not think those claims should be conceded. He was sure Disraeli would not have taken it, as he did in the year 1877-78, unless with a special object in view. He had it on the best authority, that of Mr. John Murray, a member of the Society, who told him how Lord Lytton once took him down to the India Office, and there showed him the papers which made it clear how Disraeli intended to use Cyprus. It was to be a *tête-de-pont* for Alexandretta, the Mediterranean end of a railway, which he was said to have projected, and which he was unable to carry out because a Gladstonian Government came into power in 1880. Little Englander Government as it was, it in 1882 started our Egyptian policy, which had proved a decidedly big thing. Under the circumstances he could not but regard Cyprus as being of the very highest importance to this country. The *Near East* weekly bore testimony to the determination of the Greeks to secure Cyprus to themselves, if possible. The population of Cyprus was, doubtless, largely Greek, but they had done and would do extremely well under British administration, and would strengthen our hands as they required to be strengthened in order to carry out the policy which it was no doubt our intention to carry out in accordance with our mandate for the government of Palestine, Arabia, and Mesopotamia. There was one curious little thing he wished to relate with reference to Sir Harford Jones, whose name had been mentioned by the lecturer. In 1800, Mr. (as he then was) Harford Jones was Consul-General at Baghdad. The French

Consul-General contemporary with him was a Rousseau, a cousin or nephew of the famous Jean Jacques. It so happened that, when in Cambridge recently, he (Colonel Yate) was examining the stock of a well-known bookseller, who invariably had his stall in the market-place there, and came across four quarto volumes containing *Emile*, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and other works of Jean Jacques, and found that these had been presented by the French Consul-General of Baghdad, Rousseau, to Mr. Harford Jones in 1800. They bore the signature of the donor and the bookplate of the recipient, and the interest of the "association" persuaded him to become the purchaser of the volumes.

Sir ERIC SWAYNE remarked that one or two points had been raised as to the jealousy of the Arabs generally of interference with their trading routes. Of course they were in former times, as in many respects they continued to be, the greatest traders in the world. The nature of the country which they traversed necessitated their carrying on the trade by caravan. In various parts the tribes were, even to-day, jealous of interference with their prerogative as regards the levying of duties and so on. But he was sure that the Arabs were a reasonable people, and if they were properly handled it would always be possible to arrange with them a composition. With them it was only a question of a figure. Another thing was the matter of protection to the caravans given by the tribes through whose country they passed. This was assured by the individual who represented each tribe. When the Aban, as he was called, was appointed, he technically took control of the whole of the caravan, including the property of all the persons connected with it; it was regarded for the time being as his property. Behind the Aban was the whole of his tribe, and any interference with the caravan was taken up by the tribe, whose members made war against those who were guilty of it. This sometimes led to bloody bouts, which went on alternately year after year, but which the tribes wished to avoid. The caravan and all belonging to it was to the Aban sacred, and thus his power was very great, and he was paid fees. The power of appointing the Abans belonged to the tribes through whose country the caravan passed, and thus when it went into the country of another tribe the Aban was changed, and its full control as well as the responsibility for its safe passage were formally handed over to the new one. In ancient times, he believed, there was a valuable trade carried on in Arabia derived not only from Arabia, but from the Somali coast; the distance, so short across the coast of Aden and the Arabian Sea, would prove no hindrance at all. They also did trade with that horn of Africa which projected into the Indian Ocean next Somaliland. In Somaliland, for instance, there were many features of the same kind of trade as they had in Arabia. There was the coffee which was called

Mocha coffee, because it was brought to Mocha. But subsequently that trade was brought to Aden, and Mocha was left alone. All the caravan routes, so far as coffee was concerned, led to Aden, but the article itself came from various parts, including Amhara, which was one of the outlying states of Abyssinia.

Mr. HARFORD, in the course of a brief reply, said he thought there were portions of territory between Damascus and Baghdad which were by no means an absolute desert. They were less of a desert than many British grouse moors and deer forests. Water could be found by digging down, and that not very deeply. In the rainy season the Arabian deserts could support large flocks of camels or sheep.

The CHAIRMAN said that nothing remained for him to do but to ask the audience to join in a cordial vote of thanks to Mr. Harford for his very interesting paper.