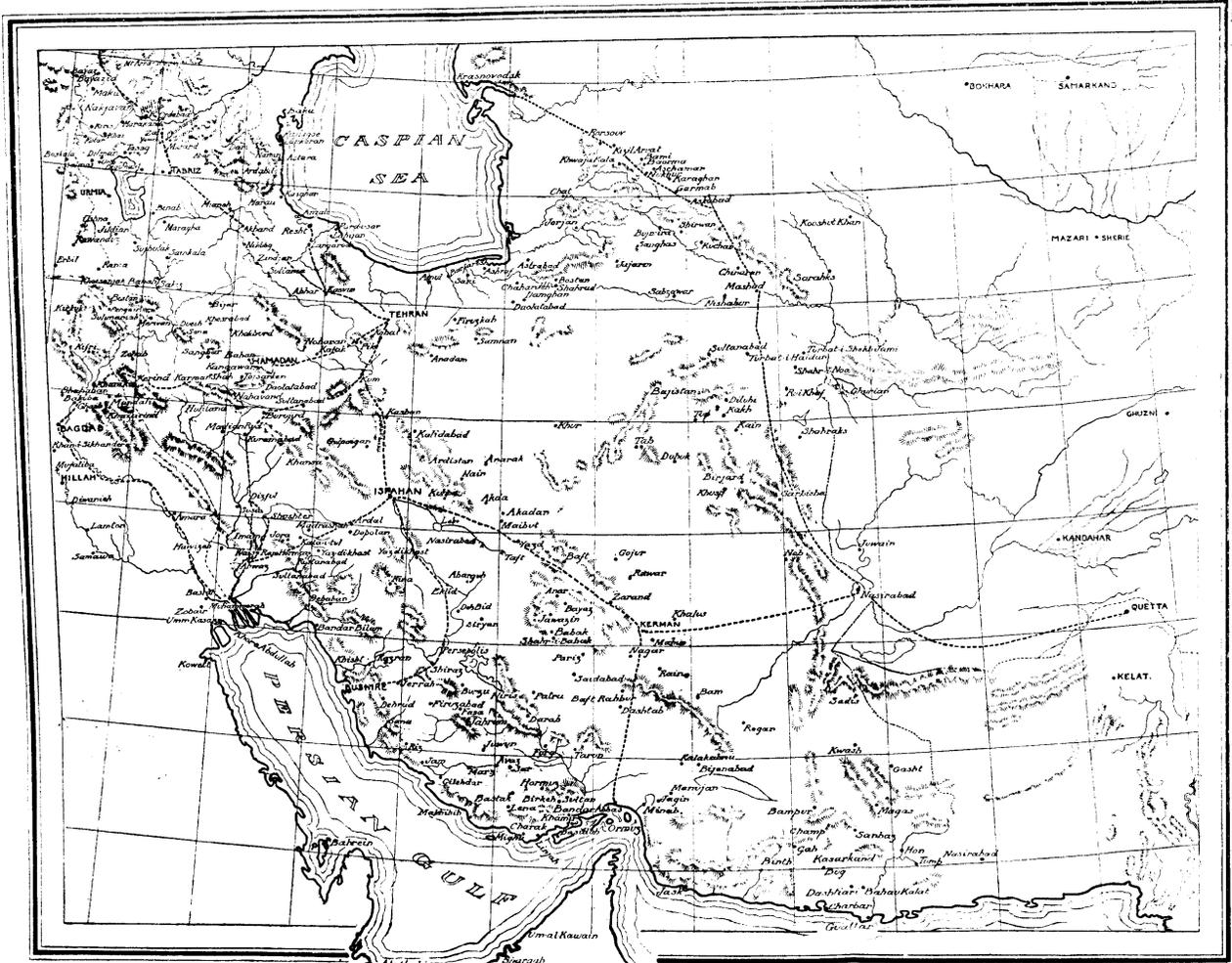


My thanks are due to the Proprietors of the "Morning Post" for permission to use in this book a series of letters written to that paper

from Persia

H. J. W.



MAP OF PERSIA The dotted lines show main trade routes

H. J. WHIGHAM

THE
PERSIAN PROBLEM

AN EXAMINATION OF THE RIVAL POSITIONS
OF RUSSIA AND GREAT BRITAIN IN PERSIA
WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF THE PERSIAN GULF
AND THE BAGDAD RAILWAY

BY

H. J. WHIGHAM

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS



LONDON

ISBISTER AND COMPANY LIMITED
15 & 16 TAVISTOCK ST. COVENT GARDEN
1903

Printed by BALLANTYNE,
HANSON & Co
London & Edinburgh

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION Pp. 1-10

CHAPTER II

FRENCH INTRIGUES AT MASKAT

The outpost of the Gulf — History of Maskat — First treaty with England — Maskat and Zanzibar — Separation of the two kingdoms — How England saved Maskat — Our moral claims upon the Sultan — The position of the French — Slave dhows fly the French flag — Attempt of French Government to secure Jissa as a coaling-station — Necessity of supporting the Sultan against French intrigue Pp. 11-27

CHAPTER III

THE PEAKL ISLANDS OF THE GULF

Navigation of the Gulf — Life on board a Gulf mail-boat — Caught in a " shamal " — Arrival at Bahrein — History of the Pearl Islands-Great Britain refuses to annex Bahrein — Bahrein comes under British protection — British agent appointed — Bahrein a possible naval station — Description of the harbour — Trade of the islands — Turkish control on the mainland Pp. 28-40

CHAPTER IV

CRUISING ON THE PERSIAN COAST

Lack of harbours — An Arab Sheikh — Illicit trade in arms — Under lee of Sheikh Shuaib — Landing at Lingah — A miniature *coup d'état* — The Resident's guard — Unpopularity of the Belgian Customs — Trade of Lingah — English station at Bassiduh — History of the station — Possibility of establishing free port at Bassiduh Pp. 41-55

CHAPTER V

SHALL WE GIVE RUSSIA BUNDER ABBAS?

Skirting the coast of Kishm — Visit to the salt caves — The town of Kishm — The island of Ormuz — Remains of Portuguese prosperity — Situation of Bunder Abbas — Earmarked by Russia — Caravan routes — Reasons for decline in trade — Insecurity of trade-routes — Competition of Nushki road — Embargo on export of cereals — Future railway lines — Shall we leave the building of railways to Russia? — Control of Bunder Abbas gives Russia control of Gulf — Advantages of Bunder Abbas as naval base — Need of a definite policy Pp. 57-76

CHAPTER VI

VISIT TO THE PIRATE COAST

The promontory of Mussandim — Elphinstone's Inlet — Remains of the Indo-European telegraph station — The aborigines — British Resident visits the Pirate Coast — History of the treaties — Suppression of the slave trade — Moral influence of the British Resident — Characteristics of the Arabs Pp. 77-89

CHAPTER VII

THE IMPORTANCE OF KOWEIT

Description of the harbour — Pelly's account of Koweit — Sheikh Mahomed assassinated by Mubarak — Warlike propensities of Mubarak — Supports the claims of the Wahabis — Defeated with heavy loss by the Amir of Nejd — Position of the Amir of Nejd — Turkish Government assists Nejd against Mubarak — British Government steps in to save Mubarak — Question of Turkish "suzerainty" over Koweit — Importance of Koweit as a possible terminus of the Bagdad Railway — The Turks occupy Ummkasa — Strategic importance of Umm-Kasa — Mubarak claims Umm-Kasa Pp. 91-107

CHAPTER VIII

PERSIAN RULE IN THE DELTA OF THE SHAT-AL-ARAB

History of the Arab tribes of the Delta — Ascendency of Mohammerah under the late Sheikh Mizal — Khazal compasses his brother's death and becomes Sheikh of Mohammerah — Strength of Khazal as a ruler — Opposition of the Arabs to the Belgian Customs — Matters finally arranged at Teheran — Visit to Mohammerah — Evading the Turkish quarantine — Trade of Mohammerah — Possibilities of the future Pp. 108-124

CHAPTER IX

THE POSITION OF TURKEY IN THE GULF

The Bar of the Shat-al-Arab — Absurdities of Turkish quarantine regulations — Steaming up the river — Arrival at Basra — Trade of the Shat-al-Arab — Insufficiency of the Tigris river service — Serious hindrance to trade — Cricket on the desert — Shooting wild boar in the marshes — Incompetency of the Turkish officials — Possibility of Turkey losing the control of the Shat-al-Arab Pp. 125-139

CHAPTER X

THE COMMERCE OF THE GULF

Trade of the Gulf carried almost exclusively by British steamers — New Russian venture — Total trade of the Gulf — Preponderance of British merchandise — Future prospects of this trade — Commerce cannot increase without improvement in internal communications — Very little increase in last

decade — Opening of Karun route has only produced slight effect — Caravan routes on Arabian side always insecure — Great improvement can only be brought about by building railways
 Pp. 140-155

CHAPTER XI

THE POLITICS OF THE GULF

Control of the seaports — Description of the harbours of the Gulf — Necessity for improving the harbours — Belgian Customs *regime* has done nothing to facilitate trade in this direction — Belgian officials regarded by Persians as servants of Russia — Difficulty of obtaining redress of wrongs or recovery of debts — Necessity for an active policy in the Gulf — If Russia builds railways to the Gulf she must control Southern Persia — Great Britain must anticipate her railway policy — Our attitude with regard to the Bagdad Bail-way — We may still bargain for control of the Bagdad-Basra section — Our responsibility with regard to Koweit — British policy in Arabia handicapped by complete ignorance of the interior — Advantage of opening up communications with Nejd
 Pp. 156-175

CHAPTER XII

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

Ruins of Mesopotamia — A week's excursion in the neighbourhood of Bagdad — Pleasures of caravanning — First view of Babylon — Welcomed by the German expedition — A lesson in cuneiform and Assyriology — Hospitality of the German savants — New light thrown upon the works of Nebuchadnezzar by the expedition — Description of the " Kasr " — The Holy Way and the temples — The shrunken glories of Babylon — Irrigation schemes of the past — The Arab as a day labourer
 Pp. 176-191

CHAPTER XIII

ON THE EUPHRATES

Jewish hospitality in Hillah — Agricultural riches of the Hillah district — Lack of transport — The methods of the Sultan as a landed proprietor — Heavy burden of taxation — An Arab feud — Cold-blooded murder — The so-called Tower of Babel — The German expedition at Birs Nimrud — Brickwork of Nebuchadnezzar — Arrival at Kifl — The Jews of the Captivity — Evening service at the Tomb of Ezekiel Pp. 192-203

CHAPTER XIV

THE SACRED CITIES OF THE SHIAHS

The remains of Kufa — First view of Nejef — Lodgings in the Marketplace — An insolent Zaptieh — Mobbed in the bazaar — The Zaptieh apologises — Across the desert to Kerbela — Picturesque aspect of the sacred city — An official reception at the house of the British agent — Discuss the prospects of the Bagdad railway with Turkish officials — Return to Bagdad — Army of Persian pilgrims on the road Pp. 204-215