

mud-walled residence of the sheik, and after him came sailors bearing various bulky packages. Just what arguments this secret agent brought to bear on the crafty old ruler of Koweit are of small consequence here. Perhaps it was the ease of repeating rifles and the embroidered saddlecloth and certain canvas socks with clinking contents that turned the trick. Suffice it to say that an obscure Arab chieftain, as the ruler of a spot determined upon for the terminus of an epoch-making railway system, and a secret agent of the Indian Intelligence Department, as the representative of His Britannic Majesty, then and there concluded a treaty — a trifle informal, it is true, but a treaty just the same — whereby the sheik of Koweit disavowed his allegiance to the Sultan and accepted the protection of Great Britain as represented by one small gumbout in the harbour.

As soon as the treaty was concluded, the British agent gave a signal with his handkerchief, and the sailors, who went about the business as if they had done the same sort of thing before brought

greatly in error, offer the conditions of equality which are the only terms that would be accepted by England, who, to drop into an expressive vulgarism, is going to be "whole hog or none." And yet, in truth, it is only by internationalization that the greatest results from the scheme can be realised—the linking of East and West. That co-operation would give an importance to the project which it cannot possess if it is merely a railroad for the development of Asiatic Turkey. It is no secret the fervor with which William II. has plunged into this railway scheme, and I very much mistake the grasp of his imperial mind if he is not able to realise how much greater would be the glory of contributing to establish a Highway of Nations than that of making a German railroad penetrating Asiatic Turkey, even if it did threaten the Indian possessions of his hated neighbour.

But Germany is still pursuing the policy of Bismarck, and the policy of that grim, shrewd old man was essentially a selfish one, so it is too much

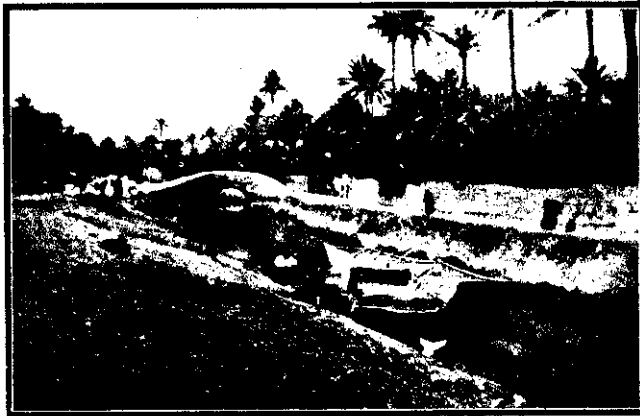
cat can never replace Gibraltar and Perim. But as long as Cape Town is in British hands, the Persian Gulf represents the one unbarred channel between the East and the West. Again by placing Constantinople in connection with the warlike populations of Asia Minor he has at a stroke doubled the military power of Turkey, a power of which he may still hope to avail himself. Koweit, be it remembered, is the one British outpost which can be reached by land more easily than by water; for when the railway is finished it will be within easy striking distance of forces massed in the fertile oasis around Basra. William of Hohenzollern has placed himself in a position to realise the dreams of Trajan and of Barbarossa, and, if I read his character aright, he will stop at nothing to see that dream fulfilled. Is it to be wondered at, then, that the Lords of Admiralty are calling for Dreadnoughts and yet more Dreadnoughts.

Come with me, now, unto Babylon, Herken and I will explain why this ancient and mysterious land, this, the last of the world's frontiers, is worthy of so fierce a struggle for possession and exploitation. Everything considered, there is no region on earth more deserving of close attention from manufacturers, merchants, and farmers than Mesopotamia and Babylonia. For within the next few years the country watered by the Tigris and the Euphrates is destined to be the scene of the greatest contest for commercial supremacy in modern times. In ancient times, when the whole of Mesopotamia-Babylonia and the greater portion of the country lying between the Tigris and the mountains of Persia and Kurdistan were artificially irrigated, those parts held the principal granaries of the world, the soil, according to Herodotus, yielding commonly two hundred and even three hundred fold. When the Chaldeans, peopled the delta of the Tigris and the Euphrates they constructed huge irrigation works which turned the land from a sandy waste into a vast and luxuriant garden. The whole plain was dotted with populous and populous cities set in the midst of encircling areas of wheat, for it is from this region that wheat, originally found in a wild and uncultivated state, was taken and gradually transplanted all over the world. At that period the land was protected against the inundations of the rivers and watered in times of drought by a stupendous system of dikes and canals, which, even

at the present day, in a ruined and sand-choked condition, cover like a net work the face of the country.

Naturally fertile and once the richest region not only in Asia but in all the world, Mesopotamia, owing to neglect, is now a barren waste. The ancient irrigation works perished because the country was so torn asunder by internecine warfare that the inhabitants ceased to keep them in repair. The scene of

Continued on page 60.



A CANAL IN BABYLONIA, SHOWING PRESENT-DAY TRANSPORTATION METHODS.

ashore and erected with astonishing alacrity a flag-staff which, by a peculiar coincidence, they happened to have on board.

The sailors formed ranks, a little ball of hunting ran up the staff, and, reaching the top, broke out into the Union Jack, the guns of the warship barked a salute, the agent took off his helmet—whether from relief or respect I scarcely know—and the dream of William the Ambitious was rudely shattered.

Twenty-four hours later the officials of the Foreign Office in Berlin were astounded to receive a note from Downing Street informing them that the completion of the Bagdad Railway to Koweit could not be countenanced by His Majesty's Government unless the line was internationalized and a half share handed over to England, for, as the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs explained in his very polite note, Koweit was now British soil. So the workmen were paid off, and the international wrangling as to terms began. And to-day a certain political agent, who is noted among his fellows for being particularly close-mouthed, hangs around his neck on occasions of ceremony the cross and ribbon of the Order of the Indian Empire, bestowed "for services rendered."

And there, for the moment, the matter rests. The Kaiser, in his great white palace at Berlin, gnaws his nails and swings his arm nervously whenever the subject is mentioned to him. For he knows full well that, without the consent of Great Britain he will find no outlet for his railway or for his ambitions in the directions of Koweit. And there is no reason to believe, as has recently been asserted, that he would ever consent to construct the line to Bagdad only, entrusting to British enterprise the completion of the route to the Gulf.

The question now is—what nation or group of nations is destined to carry on the Bagdad Railway to completion and restore the ancient land of Shinar to its former glory? The most desirable and the most natural combination for this service—speaking from an unbiased standpoint—would be Germany, France, and England. But just at present the association of England does not seem very likely. The Germans value their concessions so highly, as well they may, that they will never, unless I am

to expect that she should willingly surrender even a minor interest in this great project to a power which she so hates and fears. Germany, unable to secure for herself the sovereignty of Asia Minor, is willing to administer that rich province under the suzerainty of Turkey. Little she reckons that by adopting this policy (which would be that of Bismarck, were he alive) she rivets the yoke of the Turk on Armenia and Macedonia and deprives Austria of her access to the Aegean at Salonica, for she appreciates full well that, being herself unable to occupy Constantinople, it is imperative for her to maintain the crescent over Saint Sophia, and thus she gives a new lease of life to the ever menacing Eastern question.

The Kaiser, imbued with the doctrines of Captain Mahan, prefers an outlet on the Persian Gulf to an outlet on the Mediterranean, and that outlet he will eventually have, if to get it he has to go to war with England. He knows that as strategical positions Ormuz and Mus-

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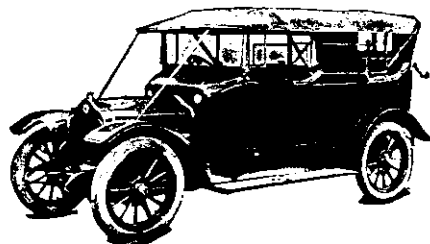
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