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THE EUPHRATES ROUTE TO INDIA
IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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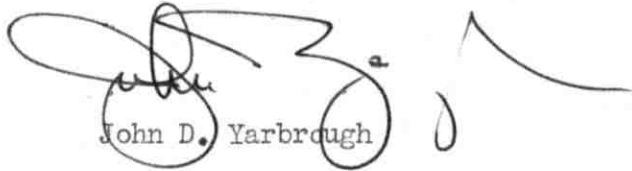
JOHN D YARBROUGH

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P R E F A C E

The Euphrates River, which cuts a slice of the known history of man since the days of Babylon and before, has been as fascinating to me as a student and traveller as it was to the travellers, entrepreneurs, and servants of Empire whose exploits and adventures, in the name of whatever their individual motivations, are recorded in this study. With a friend and associate, Robert P. Perry, I was fortunate to have descended the River in 1964 by raft and motor boat--excluding that portion which flows through the geographical confines of the Syrian Arab Republic, a section mostly covered earlier by vehicle--from Erzincan to the Persian Gulf.

The facilities which were made available to me through the courtesy of my advisor, Dr. Joseph J. Malone, and his colleagues at St. Anthony's College, Oxford, at the London School of Economics and Political Science, The India Office Library, and the Royal Geographical Society made it possible for me to record the full story of the Euphrates Expedition.



John D. Yarbrough

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PART I
POINTS OF REFERENCE

CHAPTER I

BACKDROP: PALMERSTON AND THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL ASIAN QUESTIONS

The Powers, Mehmet Ali, and the Ottoman Empire

Prescription for the "Sick Man". --Sir Stratford Canning, at the close of his second Ambassadorship at Istanbul during the crisis of 1832-33, when Mehmet Ali was poised within striking distance of the gates to Constantinople, wrote to Lord Palmerston at the British Foreign Office:

The Turkish Empire has reached, in its decline, that critical point at which it must either revive and commence a fresh era of prosperity, or fall into a State of complete dissolution. To Great Britain the fate of this Empire can never be indifferent. It would affect the interest of her trade and East Indian possessions, even if it were unconnected with the maintenance of her relative power in Europe. Nearer and more pressing duties may forbid His Majesty's Government to take an active part in the contest which now agitates Turkey; but the issue of a struggle so likely to prove decisive of the Sultan's independence can hardly be overlooked and left to chance on any sound Principles of English Policy.¹

Palmerston's reluctance. --Palmerston, however much concerned he might have been with the state of things in the East, was more immediately concerned with events at home and in Belgium; he had no wish to interfere directly in Turkey if it were avoidable. British relations with France were

¹Letter from Sir Stratford Canning to Viscount Palmerston, 19 December 1832, quoted in Frank Edgar Bailey, British Foreign Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement (Cambridge: Harvard Press, 1932), p. 227.

already cool in Europe and over the French influence with Mehmet Ali in Egypt and in the Levant, astride the Red Sea route to India; neither did Britain want to risk war with Russia over an open intervention in the East. Palmerston, therefore, depended upon the representatives of the powers to engineer a settlement in Turkey. The settlement finally achieved, however, by the Russians, was not to Britain's liking-- or France's, though her protege had emerged Pasha of all of Syria, presenting, as it were, an inviting prospect to France.

Mehmet Ali. --Palmerston's attitude with respect to Mehmet Ali was that he should not have the approaches to Mesopotamia and, further:

His real design is to establish an Arabic Kingdom.... There might be no harm in such a thing itself; but as it would necessarily imply the dismemberment of Turkey, we could not agree to it. Besides, Turkey is as good an occupier of the road to India as an active Arabian sovereign would be. We must try to help the Sultan in organizing his army, navy, and finances; and if he can get those three departments into good order he may still hold his ground.²

Russian inroad. --Mehmet Ali's getting all of Syria at Kutaya was blow enough to Britain's policy of upholding the Ottoman Empire. To have that followed by Russia's blackmail of the Sultan in the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi, achieving closure of the Dardanelles to all ships of war save the Russian, and that concession in exchange for Russian military and naval assistance at the call of the Sultan, was of grave concern to Britain. Such was Palmerston's attitude over conditions in Syria and in Asia Minor that Palmerston actively considered the possibility of a British foothold in the Near East with a colony in Syria.

A reaction. --Sir Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control

²Letter from Lord Palmerston to William Temple (his brother), 21 March 1833, quoted in Sir Henry Lytton Bulwer, The Life of Henry John Temple, Viscount Palmerston (2 vols.; London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1874), I, 144, 145.

for India, addressed a memorandum to the Foreign Office on 29 October 1833 in which he proposed a British settlement on the Bay of Iskenderun and a colony in Syria. He referred to Captain Francis R. Chesney's proposal of the navigation of the Euphrates as a medium of speedy communication with India and a "valuable channel of commerce." Grant wrote:

But there is a far more comprehensive view of this subject, and one to which late events give a vast importance. That is, not merely to convert the Euphrates and Tigris into arteries of commercial circulation but to place the command of them effectively for all purposes in the hand of Great Britain.

A commanding position on the Coast of Asia Minor would assuredly be a most desirable acquisition for this country, and particularly while Russia holds forth so imposing an aspect in that direction and when France appears equally desirous of extending her power in the Levant. The country extending from the Bay of Scanderoon to Latakia, or even to the mouth of the Orontes, on the Mediterranean, and from Beer to Sheikh Jiaber or Beles on the Euphrates appears to afford exactly the requisites desirable for such a purpose. It possesses excellent military positions and has the command of a considerable extent of good land affording a tempting subject for colonization. It would secure an excellent port upon the Euphrates enabling us to open that stream throughout its whole extent either for commercial or military purposes; and, not one of the least important advantages, it would place into our hands the passes of the Taurus which are the keys of Syria and Asia Minor.

It may be observed that the sacrifice to Ibrahim Pashah (or Mehmet Ali Pashah) would be comparatively trifling and would probably be made with perfect readiness to conciliate the good will of Great Britain.³

Palmerston's reaction, as noted on the document, was that he would like to see Aleppo included in such a project and:

The opening of the Euphrates as a canal of trade is so obvious as to have been contemplated by Mahomed Ali Pashah himself-- and the importance of the river in a military point of view has been touched upon by Mr. Ellis in a memo connected with the subject of Egypt and the present Pashah.⁴

³India Office, Secret and Political General Correspondence, Series i, Vol. II, Sir Charles Grant, "Memorandum Concerning a Settlement at the Bay of Scanderoon, " 29 October 1833.

⁴Ibid. There is apparently no evidence that Chesney was aware of this document. Probably had he known of it, since this was during the period of his impassioned plea for a trial of the Euphrates route, he would have used its content, though Grant was one of his strongest supporters.

Steps less drastic than colonization were to be taken in the eventual pacification of the Levant, however, in concert with other powers, in securing the continued existence of an independent Ottoman Empire while preserving Britain's supremacy in the Gulf.⁵

Final pacification. --When the Sultan, in revenge for Mehmet Ali's impudence, attacked in Syria, in April 1839 and was thrown back through the passes of the Taurus, Constantinople was again threatened, as was Reshid Pasha's army at Diarbekr and, thereby, Baghdad. France bade well to prosper in the Mediterranean by the ascendancy of Egypt over the Ottomans. Russia, following a policy of maintaining a weak Ottoman Empire, took no unilateral action. Acting in concert, Russia, England, Prussia, and Austria, with diplomatic pressure and with naval and military action in the Levant, forced Mehmet Ali's hand and negotiated the final pacification of the Levant, ending Egypt's threat.⁶ Not only was the peace of Europe preserved but Britain had, again, saved the guardianship of the road to India. Britain had also prudently seized Aden in 1839 for command of the Red Sea route.⁷

Britain on guard. --In continuing to counter Russian influence at

⁵For good summaries of the affairs of 1832-33 in the East, see J.A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question (4th ed; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), pp. 226-237; see also F.S. Rodkey, The Turko-Egyptian Question in the Relations of England, France, and Russia, 1832-44 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1924), pp. 10-42.

⁶The actual negotiation of terms with Mehmet Ali is described first hand in W.P. Hunter, Narrative of the Late Expedition to Syria (2 vols; London: Henry Colburn, 1842), II, 134-137. For Russia's attitude toward the maintenance of a weak Ottoman Empire on her borders, see a discussion of the Czar's secret committee of 1829, in Vernon J. Puryear, England, Russia, and the Straits Question (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931).

⁷Marriott, op. cit., p. 239.

Constantinople, Britain's policy is best summed up by Bailey:

The trade routes to India had to be protected from the steady encroachment of Russia, and the best means of protection was a strong Turkey, a Turkey loyal to, if not absolutely dependent upon, England. In this sense, British policy in the Near East was less pro-Turkish than it was anti-Russian.⁸

Britain and Russia in Persia

Sir John Malcolm wrote of an interview with Mehmet Ali when the former was enroute to England from India in 1821:

After much conversation regarding Persia, the Pacha asked me why we supported that nation, and whether its being at war with the Turks would not alter our feelings towards it. I replied that it would excite no feeling but a desire to reconcile the differences between two states, whose remaining in unison and strength was important to our interests. In Persia, I added, we were interested, because that kingdom formed a barrier to our Indian possessions, while in the Turkish Empire, particularly Egypt, we had the same barrier, and a still stronger interest as its condition affected the general peace and harmony of the commonwealth of Europe.⁹

British apprehensions of Napoleon-- the false threat. --Only the death of Czar Paul in 1801 stopped the actual march of the Cossacks on British India. Alexander I would not follow through with the joint plans of Napoleon and Paul, and then Napoleon was out of Egypt and his threat to invade India by the southern route was gone. But any threat of Napoleon's was treated with alarm and Britain's first positive action toward the preservation of Persia as a barrier to India was taken in 1800. The embassy of Captain, later Sir John, Malcolm on his first mission to Persia was British India's manifestation of that policy so well defined years later to

⁸Bailey, op. cit., p. 232.

⁹John William Kaye, The Life and Correspondence of Major General Sir John Malcolm, ... from Unpublished Letters and Journals (2 vols.; London: Smith, Elder, 1856), II, 405.

Mehmet Ali by Malcolm.

The Russian threat to India realized. --The peace of Tilsit converted, in an hour, the Emperor of France and the Autocrat of Russia into friends and allies, "and, in 1808, sent Malcolm scurrying back to Persia" with the portfolio of the diplomacist masking the muzzles of our British guns.¹⁰ And Malcolm arrived after Sir Harford Jones, envoy of the British Government who, proceeding under the principle that "the enemy of Russia could only be the natural ally of Persia" was successful, in 1809, in negotiating the Treaty of Teheran, finally signed there by Oursley in 1814.¹¹ French influence was out in Persia after 1809. It became Britain's active policy after 1810, particularly with Russia's moves into Georgia in 1813, to preserve Persia as a counterpoise to the power of the Afghans and as a barrier to Russia on the road to India.¹²

Through Malcolm's own second mission to Persia had not been the one which met with diplomatic success, the threat of British Indian force in southern Persia, in the Gulf area, certainly had its effects on Jones' mission and success.¹³

Malcolm foresaw the real threat from Russia which now began to occupy the fears of the rulers of British India and expressed those fears in a letter to his Russia acquaintance, Count Woronzorf:

¹⁰Ibid., I, 399, 402

¹¹Henry C. Rawlinson, England and Russia in the East (London: John Murray, 1875), pp. 23, 24.

¹³Brydges, Sir Harford Jones. An account of the Transaction of His Majesty's Mission to the Court of Persia, in the Years 1807-11, to Which Is Appended a Brief History of the Wahaugy (2 vols. bound as one; London: James Bohn, 1834), pp. 127-140.

The desire of securing the prosperity of Georgia and your other provinces in that quarter, and promoting the trade on the Caspian, will be your motives for interfering to prevent the northwestern parts of Persia being disturbed, while we shall see in any troubles that disturb the southern and eastern parts of that kingdom a check to our profitable trade with the Gulf, and discover in your coming across the Arras (whatever may be the professed object) a dangerous approximation to our possessions in the East. That this will eventually happen, I have no doubt. Besides the natural action of a great military empire, there is (as my whole life has given me an opportunity of observing) an impelling power upon civilization when in contact with barbarism that can not be resisted. These combined courses will bring Russia forward, and there is no nation more constitutionally jealous than one which, like Great Britain, has its greatness in a considerable degree grounded upon extended commerce. Besides, the wisest of nations, or at least those who have the greatest reputation for wisdom, have a tendency to create evils by an anticipation of them, that mocks all calculations.¹⁴

The policy of continued alertness. --Britain - and British India - had probably never been convinced that there was ever a real danger of combined French and Russian invasion of India and had come to realize that the danger was, as it ever had been, and ever will be, the gradual extension of the Russian power and the Russian territory."¹⁵

The treaty of Teheran, providing for Persian noninvolvement with enemies of Britain in exchange for British assistance in troops or money in the event of aggression against Persia and for an annual stipend to Teheran of 150,000 L., was never fully invoked by Britain. In 1828, the Persians being branded the aggressor in the Georgian campaign, Britain bought out of the treaty with a lump sum payment 150,000 L. Russia had, however by the Treaties of Gulistan in 1813 and Turkmanchai in 1828, taken possession of Erivan and Georgia, achieved exclusive naval rights in the Caspian, and "most favored nation" status in trade; the Russo-Persian border became the Aras. In 1834, the treaty for the establishment of Russian consuls

¹⁴Kaye, op. cit., II, 359, 360.

¹⁵Rawlinson, op. cit., p. 22.

ushered in a new period of Russian influence and presence in Teheran.

The unsuccessful campaigns of Abbas Mirza and Fath Ali Shah in 1833-34 and Mohammad Shah in 1837-38 against Herat, culminating in 1838 with British Indian seizure of Karraq in the Persian Gulf, were watched closely for signs of positive Russian involvement due to its using influence with the Court at Teheran. While it is not within the scope of this study, continued Russian encroachment on British India, whether as protection for her own dominions or as positive moves on India, finally resulted in the British occupation of the Punjab and the British protectorate of Dost Mohammad Khan in Afghanistan.

Caution of Britain and Russia, 1830's. --With the sensitivity of the situation in Turkey and the Levant in the 1830's, both Britain and Russia sought to make clear their immediate intentions in Persia--as each wished them to be understood by the other--in order to avoid a second possible point of direct conflict. Though never formally framed, this policy of both powers was first stated by Palmerston to Bligh, the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg in 1834, with particular reference to the internal struggle in Persia over succession to the throne:

His Majesty's Government is gratified to find that the Governments of Great Britain and Russia are acting, with regard to the affairs of Persia, in the same spirit, and are equally animated by a sincere desire to maintain, not only the internal tranquility, but also the Independence and integrity of Persia.¹⁶

Again, on the occasion of the siege of Herat and the seizure of Karraq in 1838, during an estrangement between the British and Russian missions, Nesselrode in a note to the British wrote of the Persian:

Assuredly it will rest with that Government alone to re-establish

¹⁶Valentine Chirol, The Middle Eastern Question on Some Problems of Indian Defense (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 437, 438.

between the missions of Russia and Great Britain at Teheran that happy agreement of views and of actions which we had so much at heart to form in 1834, and which had at that time been attendend with consequences so beneficial for the consolidation of the internal tranquility of the Persian Monarchy.¹⁷

.....

Palmerston asked for some assurance on the part of Russia as to her position in Persia and received the reply through Pozzo di Borzo, Russian Ambassador to London that:

It in no wise enters into the views of our cabinet to desire to direct the slightest hostile count against the security of the English possessions in India; and that far from that, our policy, in respect to Persia has invariably remained the same as it was in 1834,¹⁸

Sleeping dogs. --From the foregoing, it would appear, then, that the situation during the greater period of this study with respect to the Russian threat of India and Central Asia was much as Palmerston described the situation in Turkey and the Levant in 1834:

With Russia we are just as we were, snarling at each other, hating each other, but neither wishing for war There is nothing at present done by us because there is no danger of anything being done by them.¹⁹

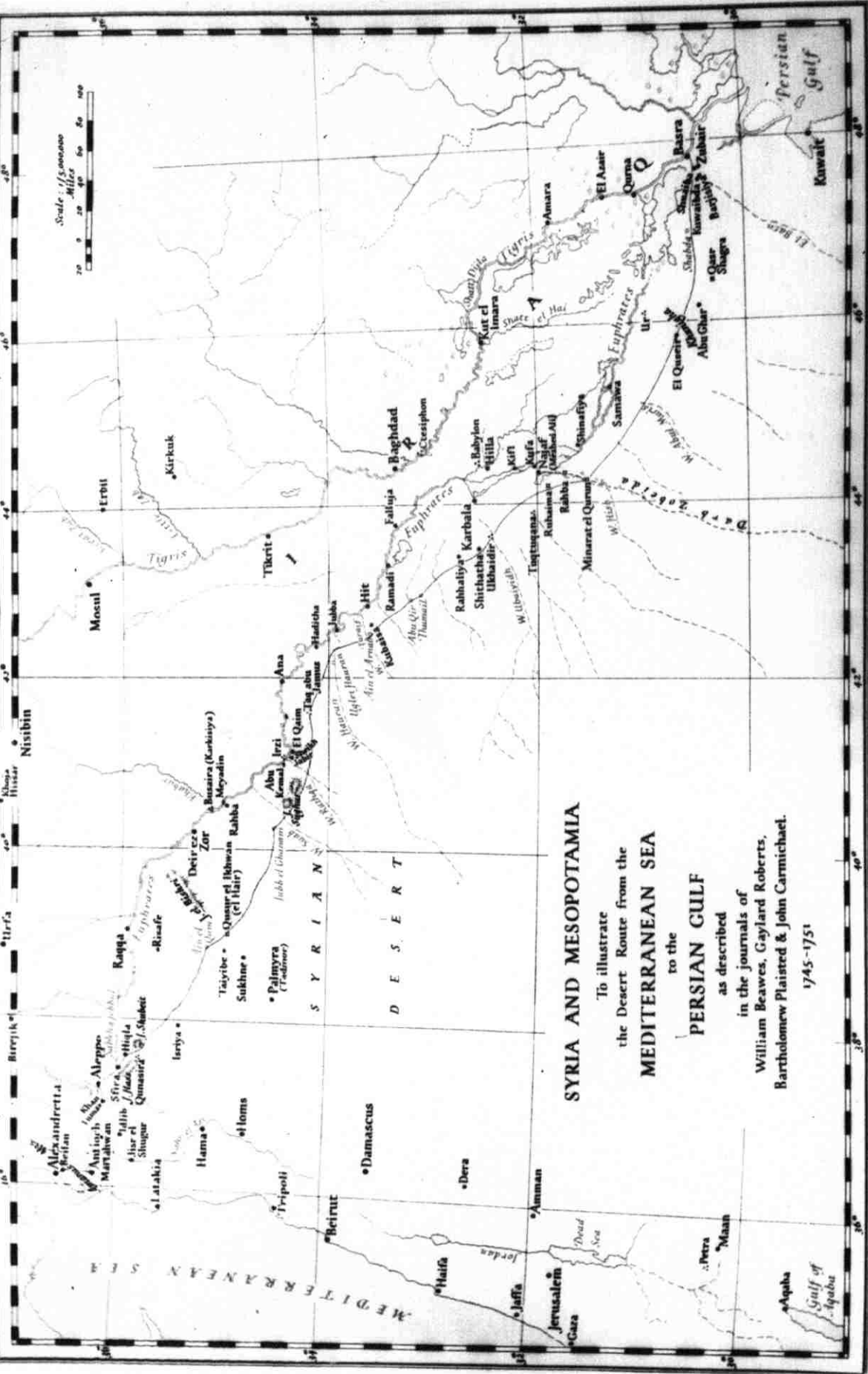
BACKDROP

It is against the foregoing background of British involvement in the affairs of the Near East and Central Asia --in counterpoint to the intrigues of France at Constantinople and in Egypt, and of Russia at the Porte and in Teheran-- that the activities which form the greater part of this work will unfold.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 339.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 440.

¹⁹Bulwer, op. cit., I, 182, 183.



SYRIA AND MESOPOTAMIA
 To illustrate
 the Desert Route from the
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
 to the
PERSIAN GULF

as described
 in the journals of
 William Beawes, Gaylard Roberts,
 Bartholomew Plaisted & John Carmichael.
 1745-1751

CHAPTER II

THE DESERT ROUTE - DECLINE AND REBIRTH

Of the three great routes which have been the main thoroughfares between Europe and Asia--namely the Red Sea, the Euphrates Valley and the Caspian--the Euphrates is the most ancient and most direct To possess this Indo-Syrian trade-route has been the desire of all great Powers,¹

Though "desert and difficult," as Nolan described it, for several decades before the opening of the Suez Canal, efforts were great and prospects high for the Great Desert Route becoming the modern high road to India.² The long sea voyage around Africa required full cargoes, demanding high freights and high market prices for merchant shipping between England and the East to be profitable. Reaction time to uprising and military threat in India was long. The southwest monsoon caused the Red Sea route to be available to sailing ships only eight months of the year, and then was subject to the caprices of the Pasha of Egypt, as was the overland journey between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Steam vessels were beginning to cut travel time to a fraction of what it had been and speed was essential in the expanding trade of the Industrial Revolution and the demands of Empire.

The decline. --The routes by way of the Red Sea and the Euphrates

¹Douglas Carruthers, "The Great Desert Caravan Route, Aleppo to Basra," The Geographical Journal, September 1918, p.157.

²E. H. Nolan, *The British Empire in India and the East* (2 vols., London: James S. Virtue, n.d.), I, 372. The Geographical Journal, September 1918, op. cit., p. 159.

had been interrupted with the ascendancy of the Arabs in the seventh century; most of the trade, controlled by Venice, moved north to the route which brought goods by way of the Hindu Kush and the Caspian; the historical routes by Palmyra and Alexandria were by-passed. But the trade--mostly in luxury goods--had never completely ceased to flow. With the rise of the Ottoman Empire and its spread into Europe, the trade of Venice with the East via Constantinople died out and English merchants, heretofore content to be dependent on the Venetians, began to look for new sources.³

The Levant Company. --Though there were other established efforts at strengthening the eastern trade, the first long-lasting British effort at establishing a British commerce in the Orient was that of the Levant Company. The first official English commercial tie to the Ottoman Empire had been the restrictive firman granted to Anthony Jenkinson by Suleiman I in 1553, which was never taken advantage of by the British.⁴ The capitulations granted England by the Sultan in 1580 resulted in the establishment of a Company which then held a monopoly over the trade of England with the Ottoman Empire.⁵ This effort eventually became an association of merchants known as the Levant Company--and it flourished. English consuls and diplomats in Turkey and Syria were Levant Company employees for more than 200 years until the company was dissolved in 1825.⁶ Factories--agencies--were established initially at Iskenderun, Tripoli, and Aleppo, the latter taking the lead; goods could be purchased from caravans again coming into Aleppo and

³Nolan, loc. cit.

⁴J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East (2 vols., Princeton; Van Nostrand, 1956), I, 5,6,16-19.

⁵M. Epstein, The Early History of the Levant Company (London: Routledge, 1908), pp. 9-12.

⁶Hurewitz, op. cit., I, 9, 10.

at Tripoli. The desert route for luxury items began to revive.

The East India Company. --The Dutch enterprise of challenging the Portuguese supremacy around the Cape and in Eastern waters in the closing of the sixteenth century enabled them to bring their goods by the shipload to Europe and undersell the English merchants who were forced to deal with middlemen at Aleppo. This resulted in the application and granting of rights for a monopoly of British trade in the East Indies, and in 1600 there was constituted a "body politic," The Governor and Company of Merchants of London Trading to the East Indies. The East India Company, then, was an outgrowth of the Levant Company and many of the officers and members of the one were associated with the other.⁷

Though the Levant Company had not succeeded in opening its own routes to India, the East India Company proved a serious challenge to the Portuguese and the Dutch. It was not, however, until the mid-seventeenth century that the British were established at the head of the Persian Gulf and it was a century later that a permanent establishment was made at Basra and the British Empire remained supreme in the Gulf for two centuries.

By about the middle of the seventeenth century, the East India Company was using the route through the Syrian desert for a great deal of travel by its employees coming and going between England and India. The route had been somewhat restored to use and was considered as safe as--and shorter than--the Red Sea route.⁸

Influence of the Ottomans on the Overland Route. --After their conquests of Syria, Mesopotamia, and a large part Arabia in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans had kept barely alive the old routes through the desert

⁷Epstein, op. cit., 31, 32.

⁸The Geographical Journal, September 1918, op. cit., 162, 163

and through Mesopotamia and along the Tigris. This was done through a courier service necessary for administration of the Empire; this Imperial service was operated by the Turkish treasury and served as a fast trunk route by horseback on the more-travelled routes--by dromedary across the desert--for political and administrative dispatches and mandates, and for the movement of monies. The couriers were known as Tatars, a term, according to Grant, derived from an old Turkish word, tatar, meaning messenger, and distinct from Tartar, the race. As couriers of the Sultan in distinctive dress, they were highly respected.⁹ As the influence of the British rose in the Ottoman Empire, travellers could often, for a fee, be placed under the escort of a Tatar who also happened to be making his way to or from Constantinople, Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad, or Basra. From Aleppo, the route was by way of Biricik--also the embarkation point for boats and rafts--to Diarbekr and Mosul, to Baghdad and the Gulf. From Constantinople, the line ran to Sivas and then Diarbekr. The dromedary desert service took the old caravan routes. A description of the activities and esteem of the Tatars was provided by a late eighteenth century traveller from Baghdad:

We rode near a mile in the Bazar, where the merchants, having been apprized when I should go, were waiting with their letters. My Tatar took, I am sure, upwards of two hundred under his charge, this being the only method that they have of forwarding letters from one city to another. The merchants and Tatars are, therefore, always upon very good terms; and the office of Tatar, as it is of the greatest trust, is also very profitable; for, beside their other emoluments they receive considerable presents from the merchants.

We overtook the Tatar's servant with three horses, the one on which he rode had my European clothes, a few necessaries belonging to the Tatar, and a couple of leathern bottles with water. The second horse had only a cloth on him and a bridle . . . as a reserve. The third was laden with two bales of merchandise a thing expressly against our

⁹Christina P. Grant, The Syrian Desert (London: A. and C. Black, 1937) pp. 242-244.

agreement.¹⁰

Another eighteenth century traveller, this one going from Aleppo to Baghdad, provided a comparable description:

[The Tatar was] one of the vast number of that description who are employed by the Turkish State in carrying despatches from Court and the various Viceroys and Bachaws, and interchangeably between them again; that they were men on whose fidelity the utmost reliance could be had; and that this man, who had an excellent character, had agreed to take me to Baghdad, provided I would submit to the disguise of a Tartar.

. . . in several places I was to pass as his slave.¹¹

Campbell's arrangements, according to the traveller himself, were made by the Consul at Aleppo in view of the stir created by Campbell's rather open affair with a married Aleppine lady.¹²

The Pigeon Post.--Homing pigeons were used for carrying messages across the desert as early as the reign of the Caliph Al Mahdi in the eighth century.¹³ The Arabs' use of the pigeons was continued by the Ottomans. On long routes, there were towers, making possible a relay system, and caravans could in this way, send out position reports and emergency messages.¹⁴ Early travellers described this use of birds.

William Parry, in the party of Sir Anthony Sherley which visited Aleppo in 1598 wrote of the Pigeon Post:

¹⁰John Jackson, Journey from India towards England in the Year 1797 by a Route Commonly Called Overland (London: Cadell and Davis, 1799), pp.109,110.

¹¹Donald Campbell, A Journey Overland to India, Partly by a Route Never Gone Before by Any European (London: J. Owen, 1796), pp. 89, 90.

¹²Ibid., pp. 86, 87.

¹³Grant, loc. cit.

¹⁴Douglas Carruthers, ed., The Desert Route to India (London: Hakluyt Society, 1925) p. xx. Carruthers cites Pedro Texiera as being impressed with the regular use of pigeons to keep Baghdad informed of the position and welfare of a caravan with which he was travelling to Aleppo in 1604-05.

They have one thing most usual among them, which though it be right well knowne to all of our Nation that knowe Turkie, yet it exceedeth the credite of our honord contriemen, for relating whereof (perhappes) I may be held a liar,

And this it is, when they desire to heare news, or intelligence out of any remote parts of their country with all celeritie (as we say, oppore the wings of the winde) they have pigeons that are so taught and brought to the hand that they will flie with letters (fastened with a string about their bodies under the wings) containing all the intelligence of occurents, or what else is to be expected from those partes:

.
Whiles their camels are three months coming they know what merchandize is fit to be kept, and what to do away with.¹⁵

Sherley made mention of the pigeons in his own journal and Tavernier, who travelled in the seventeenth century, wrote of the use of pigeons by the European merchants of Aleppo:

So soon as they of Alexandretta discover a vessel and know what colour she carries, the Vice-Consul of the Nation to which the Vessel belongs, fails not to advertise sic the Consul of Aleppo by a note which is carry'd in four or five hours, though it be more than two or three days journey on Horse-back. For they tye a note under the Wing of pigeon, who is taught what to do, and she flies directly to the place whence she was brought. For more surety, they usually send two, that if one should miscarry in the dark, which has many times happen'd, the other may supply the defect.¹⁶

Early river travellers. --There were, as early as the sixteenth century European travellers who went part of the way through Turkish Arabia by boat on the Euphrates, thence across by the Little Desert Route from Anah or Hit to Baghdad, or as far downstream as Fallujah before going overland to Baghdad. Among then were the Englishmen John Newberry and Ralph Fitch,

¹⁵William Parry, A New and Large Discourse of the Travels of Sir Anthony Sherley Knocht, by Sea and over Land to the Persian Empire (London: Valentine Simms, 1601), pp. 16, 17.

¹⁶Jean B. Tavernier, The Six Voyages of Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Made by J.B., (Several vols.; London: 1678), II, 54, 55. See also Evelyn Philip Shirley, The Sherley Brothers, a Historical Memoir (London: Chiswick, 1848), pp. 16-18. The use of homing pigeons was later discontinued by common agreement among merchants when one enterprising European in Aleppo learned, by Pigeon Post, from a colleague in Alexandretta that there was a shortage of gall nuts in Europe, ~~cornered~~ the market and became wealthy.

who went all the way downstream from Biricik to the Gulf on Newberry's second journey in 1583;¹⁷ Anthony Sherley and his party in 1599; and the German, Dr. Leonard Rauwolf, in 1574.¹⁸

Sherley and his party went from Aleppo to Biricik, "by which runs the most famous river Euphrates, parting Mesopotamia and Syria." At Biricik the party took boats to Hit and were "three and twenty days passing down the same." Parry wrote of an incident at Raqqa:

.....

We came by a castle called Racca, where we were to take in fresh meate and men to rowe. But loe there happened that a Turke, being in one of the boats in our company, discharged his peece toward the shore at random, where he most unhappily slew a Turke of the towne (the bullet entering his braine . . . which cost Sir Anthony for his company some hundred crowmes.¹⁹

.....

From Hit, Sherley went by caravan to Baghdad before proceeding on to Persia and his soon-to-boom career at the Court.

The Desert Route. --Of caravan travel, Rauwolf wrote: Those that go in great Caravans through them the deserts must have their Leader or Pilot (by them called Caliphi) as well as those at Sea Then they provide themselves . . . with Victuals for a long time, as well as those that

¹⁷Arnold Wright, Early English Adventurers in the East (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1917), p. 32 et passim.

¹⁸Rauwolf sailed from Biricik for Anah on 30 August 1574. See Dr. Leonard Rauwolf, Travels of Doctor Rauwolf, trans. Nicholas Staphorst, (London: 1693), p. 131. Rauwolf's experiences are briefly discussed later from Ray's edition.

¹⁹Parry, op. cit., p. 19. Parry wrote that the party disembarked at Deir ez Zor but described the bitumen springs at Hit, which was a ferry site for caravans and more likely "three and twenty days passing downe" from Biricik. He also referred to Baghdad as "Babilon" and mentioned that the Tower of Babel was three days' journey. The party remained a month and left for Persia. Of the Lurs, Parry wrote: "Lourdes addicted to thieving not much unlike the wilde Irish." See pp. 20, 22, 24, 25.

go by Sea.²⁰

The caravan routes avoided centers of population, both to avoid the payment tribute to the Arab chieftains of the river towns and to avoid, as much as possible, raiding parties. The route known to us as the Great Desert or Overland Route was from Aleppo to Basra, by way of, but not entering Hit, paralleling the Euphrates. The Little Desert Route was by way of Urfa and Mosul to Baghdad or--also known by the name Little Desert Route--coincided with the track to Hit and then crossed to Baghdad. Travellers for the Gulf could then go down the Tigris. Caravans travelled from each terminus several times a year during the eighteenth century. Caravans were heavier laden leaving Aleppo and the journey south took less time than the journey, north, most of the animals on the northward journey being not loaded but brought to Aleppo for marketry.²¹

The Desert Mail. --By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain had for some years been supreme in the East and had proven the naval power which upheld the Empire for the next two centuries. Trade had taken the route of the Cape and the Overland Route was little used. In 1798, however, Marquess Wellesley, Governor General of India, ordered the setting of up a regular bi-weekly desert mail route between Basra and Aleppo. John Barker, Consul at Aleppo, wrote in his memoirs that "as soon as, or very shortly after, the trade with India took the Cape route, the 'factory' at Aleppo was broken up, and the appointment of a Consul by the Levant and Indian Companies was more in regard to the business of the Company at Smyrna and at Constantinople and for the transmission of correspondence to and from India, than for the

²⁰Rauwolf, op. cit., p. 163.

²¹Carruthers, The Desert Route to India, op. cit., pp. XXIX-XXXIV. Carruthers, reproduces the journals of William Beawes (1745), Bartholomew Plaisted (1750), and John Carmichael (1751), all of whom travelled the Great Desert Route to or from Basra and Aleppo.

existence of trade in Syria."²²

Forced to reopen the Desert Route by France's denial of the Red Sea Route for dispatches between England and India, Wellesley started a surge of interest in the Euphrates Valley route that was to lead to one of the great experiments and adventures of the Empire.

²²Edward B.B. Barker, ed., Syria and Egypt under the Last Five Sultans of Turkey (2 vols.; London: Samuel Tinsley, 1876), I, 24. The East India Company appointed John Barker Agent at Aleppo in 1799 at a salary of 1200 L. per year to "preserve communications via Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf." See Alfred C. Wood, A History of the Levant Company (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 186.

CHAPTER III

SOME EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY TRAVELLERS IN MESOPOTAMIA

With the rise in trans-Arabian trade by way of the Desert and other routes, there came an influx of articulate and interesting travellers. Most of these men were employees of the East India Company travelling between England and India, much as the desert travellers of the eighteenth century. These were not the Rawlinsons, the Taylors, the Rosses or Riches or Layards, but, for the most part, civil servants and merchants seeking a faster voyage across Asia. It became the fashion to travel by boat on the Tigris to or from Basra or Baghdad. The desert journey was then shorter by the Little Desert Route or one could avoid the desert altogether by making arrangements to travel with a Tatar.

The travellers whose journeys are described below were, with one exception, all transients, seeking their ease in the passage. A review of their travels may serve the reader as interesting background to other, later, communications efforts in the area.

John Jackson

The lengths to which men put themselves. --On 25 June 1797, an Englishman, John Jackson, departed Basra for Baghdad as a member of a party arranged by the Agent at Basra, Mr. Manesty. The party travelled in three boats, two for passengers and the third for guards and trackers. The party

The party furnished its own provisions, equipment, cooks and other personal servants. Of further arrangements for travel, Jackson wrote: "Immediately after embarking, we were dressed so as exactly to resemble the Arabs in our appearance; and our mustaches were now grown pretty long, having never shaved since we left India."¹

Jackson's party arrived at Baghdad on 14 July; with the assistant of agents of the East India Company, he made preparations to continue alone to Asia Minor and Constantinople. Of his arrival in Baghdad, he commented:

An Englishman has at Baghdad a privilege which is not granted to the people of any other nation. Whatever baggage he may have with him, instead of being taken to the Custom-house is allowed to be carried to the place where he is going to reside, and an officer of the Customs is sent thither to examine it.²

Concerning other conditions at Baghdad in 1797, Jackson commented:

Few Europeans transact any business at Bagdad, or keep any Consuls there. The English have no consuls, but their business is managed by an Armenian named Coja Makell, a very respectable man.

The French at present have here a Consul named Rousseau, who is a relative of the famous writer Jean Jacques. They do not, however, carry on much business here, having at present no communication with India. The French, during the present war, have often attempted to send dispatches to India by way of Bussora and Muscat, but these have always been intercepted by the vigilance of the East-India Company's Resident at Bussora.³

Travel with a Tatar.—Majesty's clerk in Bagdad was able to secure a firman for Jackson to travel, with the rank of Consul, overland to Constantinople with a Tatar. The agreement, in order to provide a surer passage to Constantinople, was that part of the money for Jackson's passage would be paid at Bagdad and the remainder at the destination. For the travel, on horseback, the traveller described the uniform of the Tatar:

¹Jackson, op. cit., pp. 36-39.

²Ibid., p. 90.

³Ibid., p. 101, 102.

"Though I was to travel under the title of Consul, yet it was necessary to wear the Tatar dress, to avoid being insulted by the populace I had also my head shaved, which I found to be of great service, as it kept me cool, and was more convenient to me in wearing the Tatar dress.

.....
My dress consisted of a yellow cap about a foot high, broad at top and almost flat, but becoming gradually narrower till it fitted the head. The lower part of the cap was covered all round with black lambskin about four inches deep, the inside lined and quilted and in the upper part stuffed with wool extremely tight. Being thus calculated to resist any weapon, it is an excellent safeguard to the head. (Italics mine.) This cap . . . is called a Culpack, and is worn only by the Tatars. My other articles of apparel were, a brown cloth coat. . . blue Turkish trowsers . . . and strong red boots to pull over the trowsers as high as the calf of the leg. The under-dress is a Turkish gown . . . and a shirt without a collar I wore a pair of strong leather breeches under my trowsers . . . and a cummerbund about six yards long was tied very tightly around my waist, and in this I hung a brace of pistols, beside having a large Turkish sabre fastened round my middle with a belt.⁴

For the day, travelling with the Tatar and a servant and, with several pack horses, Jackson travelled rapidly by way of Mosul, Diarbekr and Sivas to arrive at Constantinople on 19 August 1797.

Captain the Honorable George Keppel

The deluxe cruise. --Travellers-in-style were George Keppel who travelled in a party of five from India to England in 1824 by Basra, Baghdad, Persia and Asia Minor.

Keppel and his party were met at Basra on 20 February by Captain Robert Taylor, the East India Company's Political Agent in Turkish Arabia and they were, in comparison with the sojourns of other, less socially distinguished travellers of the time, rather grandly entertained. Daoud, Pasha of Baghdad was paying his first visit as Pasha to Basra. From Keppel's description, we gain some insight into the esteem in which the English were held in Turkish Arabia at that time.

⁴Ibid., p. 101, 102.

At the official entry of the Pasha into the city, the notables in the town, among them the Political Agent and his party were presented to the Pasha. Keppel wrote of the protocol: "After some diplomatic discussion, the Pasha consented to pay the political agent the first visit, provided the compliment was immediately returned." And of the Pasha's visit: "The interview was uninteresting; the Pasha being a man of mean abilities; and excelling in nothing, but that at which most despots are proficient--extortion." (Italics mine.)⁵

Keppel and his party, in full dress, accompanied Taylor on his return call on the Pasha and described the reception:

.....

We were no sooner in sight of the Pasha, than two of his officers, one on each side, put their arms under his shoulders, and carried him into the hall of audience, as if he had been suddenly deprived of the use of his legs; a similar form was observed by the attendants of Captain Taylor. In this manner, both, according to established etiquette, entered the apartment together: for: as in Turkey the inferior rises to receive the superior, and as both here considered themselves equal: the one rising for the other would have been a concession that neither would have made.

.....

Agreeably to an exclusive privilege granted to Englishmen, we did not take off our shoes. Without entering into the merits of that John Bull policy, which exacts from the natives of the country in which we are residing a conformity to our customs, instead of our adopting theirs, the privilege we Englishmen claim, both at Baghdad and at this place, of keeping on our shoes in the presence of the Pasha, certainly does appear an useless acquisition of privilege on our parts and one cannot but be highly offensive to their Asiatic feelings.⁶

.....

Keppel wrote that it was common practice in those days that the river traveller to Baghdad from Basra secured a place on one of a fleet of boats, "which start at this season of the year [spring] whenever their numbers are sufficient to enable them to resist the attacks of the lawless tribes of

⁵Captain the Hon. George Keppel, Personal Narrative of A Journey from India to England, etc. . . . (London: Henry Colburn, 1827), p.28.

⁶Ibid., pp. 29, 30.

mandering Arabs." Tired of waiting for the fleet to sail, Keppel and his party, in early March 1824, made and executed their own plans for ascending the Tigris. They hired a sixty-foot boat with twenty-four trackers, a guard of twenty Zubair Arabs, the boat captain, a commander of the guard, an over-all superintendent. They took on provisions for two weeks and "a plentiful supply of spirits." As personal servants, they hired an "Indian cook, a Persian Haji, and a half-starved Ethiopian." The party made no attempt at disguise and travelled in their European clothes.

Henry A. Ormsby and "Dervish Ali"

The AWOL. --One of the more intrepid desert and river travellers of Turkish Arabia in the early nineteenth century was Midshipman Henry A. Ormsby, Indian Navy. Concerning his early career, the official Historian of the Indian Navy wrote:

He absented himself from the service at the age of nineteen, and for three years dwelt among them [the Arabs] in their tents. These wanderings were undertaken during the years 1826-30, and the Bombay Government, as a punishment for absenting himself so long without leave, struck his name off the Indian Navy list. His services to geographical science were, however, so considerable, and his reports of so great value, that he was reinstated in the Service 7

Wellsted, who was editor of Ormsby's memoirs, wrote that Lieutenant Ormsby received a leave of absence in March 1830 and proceeded to Basrah via Muscat and Bushire.⁸ Low did show him on active service in 1830 and

⁷Charles R. Low, History of the Indian Navy (2 vols., London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1877), II, 33, 34.

⁸James R. Wellsted, Travels to the City of the Caliphs. (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, 1840), I, 53.

we shall not concern ourselves further with that status.⁹

Ormsby was proceeding from Bombay to Basra by way of Muscat and Bushire. At Muscat, he fell in with slavers and, in order to be allowed to travel with them to Bandar Abbas, whence they were headed, he was required to enter the trade and he wrote that he purchased a fifteen year old boy and girl. After some weeks of rugged voyaging, the party reached Bandar Abbas and headed for the interior of Persia to sell the slaves. They were raided, however, and the slaves stolen. Ormsby who, in the memoir, had intended to release his two slaves was quite effected by the loss, for romance had entered the picture. He wrote:

Zeina had been torn from me at a period when, by her devotion to my will and her sweet and engaging manners, she had greatly attached myself to her. Already had I formed plans for her education and improvement.¹⁰

Arrived in Basra in late summer Ormsby took a room and took in a friend and brother officer, Wellsted's "W--.", from whom he learned much about the country. He wrote of his friend:

W--. had obtained from the government permission to travel, and obtained for them information concerning Arabia. He had been about two years there, and assumed the name of Rustom Beg,--was a perfect master of the language, and, in other respects, a complete native. What has become of this extraordinary individual I know not. He afterwards journeyed into Central Asia, and the last heard of him was that he was

⁹Low, op. cit., I, 535. Wellsted remarked that "it is a singular fact, that a small service like the Indian Navy should have, in one and the same year, seven midshipmen, four of whom have traversed more of the East than probably the same number of individuals alive--Ormsby, Lynch, W___., and, may I add, the editor of these volumes." See Wellsted, op. cit., I, 152. Of the four, we shall hear more of the first three in Turkish Arabia; for Wellsted's best, see his Travels in Arabia (2 vols.; London: Henry Colburn, 1837).

¹⁰Wellsted, op. cit., I, 56, 57, 91.

engaged hewing wood and fetching water amidst the Turcomans.¹¹

Ormsby remained at Basra "about a month" and was summoned to Baghdad by Colonel Robert Taylor, the Political Agent. Taylor asked him to continue the survey of the Euphrates which had recently been interrupted by the murder of the survey party. Ormsby left Baghdad on 25 December 1830 and returned to Basra. He hired a small boat, "manned with twelve men, six of whom were trackers" and began his survey at Basra.¹²

At Qurna, Ormsby was entertained by the Admiral of the Turkish Fleet which was anchored there and about which several of the travellers of the period remarked. Ormsby wrote of the fleet:

These vessels are the remains of the fleet built or purchased in 1651, to act against that which Shah Abbas had fitted out in the Persian Gulf. They never, however, put to sea, but have remained unemployed here ever since, and a wretched plight they are in. One sunk at her anchors two years ago, while firing a salute.¹³

Living off the land as he did, Ormsby wisely took advantage of available food, a practice which is wise in those parts today. He wrote of a feast at Suq as Shuyukh:

¹¹Ibid., p. 151. W___ was Lieutenant W. H. Wyburd and was listed by Low as being "on furlough" in 1830. His career and fate were indeed strange ones. He was an accomplished linguist and was chief interpreter to the Commodore in the Persian Gulf, a position which had also been held by Lynch. In 1835, he was sent by the British Envoy in Persia on a mission to Khiva. It was learned in 1845 that he had never reached Khiva but had been captured at Bokhara. Investigation revealed three years later that he had escaped from Bokhara and had been recaptured and sold into slavery. The Deputy Commissioner at Peshawar, later General Sir George Lawrence, received a letter in 1849 to the effect that Wyburd was a prisoner in Khokhand. Attempts to contact Wyburd failed. A petition from his family was presented in the House of Commons by Disraeli in 1851. The India Board replied to Parliamentary inquiries that every exertion had been made for two years on Wyburd's behalf "short of assembling an army." The search was given up and, orders of the Bombay Government, on 2 March 1852 Wyburd was struck off the Indian Navy list effective 16 October 1837. See Low, op. cit., I, 535 and II, 93, 94.

¹²Wellsted, op. cit., I, 154, 155.

¹³Ibid., p. 157.

As we plunged our hands into the smoking dishes, Hadji his guide and I regarded each other askance with looks of infinite satisfaction, acting on Dugold Dalgetty's principle, on such occasions, to lay in provender for three days. Both played our parts until we were filled to repletion; it might, we reasoned, be some weeks before we meet with fare to equal this.¹⁴

After having been robbed at Lamlum, where his crew had then deserted, Ormsby was living aboard the boat with little in the way of funds and no assistance toward furthering his mission. He met then Dervish Ali:

His real name was Elliot, but he affected the character his former designation implies for the better furtherance of his views. Of a wild and roving disposition, he had traversed the greater part of the East, and had lately employed himself in sketching the ruins of Babylon. An itinerant singer and storyteller accompanied him.¹⁵

Divergence for a side tale. --It is best to describe Elliot--Dervish Ali--as those most familiar with his career knew him. This singular fellow figures later in this study when employed with the Chesney Expedition. From Low we have a sketch of his career in the East:

The career of this gentleman was in many respects a remarkable one, and as he was associated with two officers of the Indian Navy [three, Ormsby, Bowater, and Lynch], a brief notice in these pages is justly his due. Mr. Elliot, who was well known in the East as a great traveller and orientalist, first went abroad in 1818, and entered the service of the Sultan of Turkey as a surgeon; at Vorno he was taken prisoner by the Pursians and sent to Siberia, where he remained in exile two years. After his release he travelled over many eastern countries, and was one of the gentlemen who escaped from the Arabs in that fatal affair at Singar, when Lieutenant Bowater, I.N., and Mr. Taylor were killed. He was then attached to the Survey under Lieutenant Ormsby, I.N., and later was with Captain Chesney. On the conclusion of this undertaking the British Government employed him to conciliate the Arab tribes of Mesopotamia and obtain geographical information of the country, and, in 1837, while thus engaged, he died within three days' journey of Damascus.¹⁶

Of Elliot's character and activities in the early 1830's, we have a

¹⁴Ibid., p. 168.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 209.

¹⁶Low, op. cit., II, 32n.

note from Lady Sheil written 27 May 1852 while travelling in Luristan with her husband:

More than twenty years ago another Englishman lived among these tribes. He assumed the character of a Musselman and derveesh, and called himself by the name of Derveesh Ali. So well did he personate the character that on one occasion he appeared before several English gentlemen, and exclaimed 'Hoo Hak!' with such emphasis and discretion that, until he addressed them in English his disguise was not detected. In his peregrinations through Looristan he had taken a Loor wife, whom he afterwards found it convenient to exchange for a donkey.¹⁷

Madame Helfer met Elliot at Aleppo in 1835, while he was employed as an interpreter for the Euphrates Expedition and was travelling with H.B. Lynch on a pacification mission among the tribes:

The latter [Elliot] was a Eurasian, the son of an English gentleman and a native Mohammedan woman, not of legitimate birth, which in England is of more consequence than elsewhere. He had, however, received a careful education in England. He was afterwards taken prisoner . . . by the Russians He made his escape, however, and reached Constantinople, where he exchanged the religion of his father for that of his mother, and became a dervish--a useful exchange for one who wishes to travel safely and comfortably through Asia This pseudo-dervish wore a coarse grey robe, a broad girdle round the waist with a pair of pistols in it, a shawl of camel's hair round his head, and red leather boots, the sign of a polished saint, for a true dervish travels the glowing earth barefoot. A gazelle skin, thrown over his shoulders, served him as a mantle and a couch. Refined features and a bright dark eye gave evidence of higher culture than you would have expected from his garb. His adventures, which he soon related to us, excited our interest. He was one of those people who, richly endowed by nature but outcasts from society, live in perpetual conflict with it, and either conquer or perish.¹⁸

Confirming Elliot's death, we have a letter from Colonel Taylor at Baghdad, 6 September 1837, to the Secret Committee of the Board of Control for the East India Company:

.....

¹⁷Sheil, Lady, Glimpses of Life and Manners in Persia (London: John Murray, 1856), pp. 225, 226.

¹⁸Countess Pauline Nostitz (Mme. Helfer) The Travels of Doctor and Madame Helfer, trans. G. Sturge, (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1878), p. 122.

I regret to be obliged to state the decease of Mr. Elliot a few days after he left Damascus with a large caravan on his way hither.

He travelled as a Mahomedan, and as such was buried in the desert by his cameleer and companions.¹⁹

.....

Ormsby and Elliot continued upstream to Fallujah, and then returned to Baghdad, in the spring of 1831, to continue the survey later, after meeting Captain Chesney at the Residency.²⁰

Stocqueler

An imperialist. --One traveller of the early 1830's, worth mention here more for his remarks concerning what should have been the future status of Turkish Arabia than for his travels, was J.H. Stocqueler, who returned to England from India by way of Bushire through Persia, Turkish Arabia, Armenia, and Russia in 1831-32.

Dressed as an Arab, Stockqueler started for Baghdad from Basra on 17 April 1831 by way of the Shatt al Arab and the Tigris. In his boat were five guards, six trackers, the captain, one body servant and himself. Of tracking--the manual pulling of a boat against the wind or current or through shallow water--Stocqueler wrote:

The business of tracking, as may be conceived, is extremely fatiguing and dangerous: in fact, so excellent a test does it furnish of the muscular powers and courage of a man that the heads of the Mollah [sic] tribes require that each Mollah should make three trips to Baghdad as a tracker, before he can be qualified for the married state and the care

¹⁹India Office records, Factory Records, Persia and Persian Gulf Series, No.57, letter from Colonel Taylor to the Secret Committee, 6 September 1837.

²⁰Wellsted, op. cit., I, p. 232. It will be seen likely in a following chapter that if the meeting of Ormsby and Elliot was as described in Wellsted, Elliot was enroute to intercept and join Ormsby on the river. It will also appear that upon departure from Baghdad the second time, they were enroute to survey the stream from Lamlum, (where Ormsby had had his instruments stolen), to Biricik. Actually, they crossed the desert to Damascus after more misadventures. Their visit there is described in Joseph J. Malone, "The Good Life in Damascus", The Middle East Forum (Beirut), Summer 1964, pp. 12-17. Ormsby later continued alone from Damascus to the Mediterranean for a rather useless survey of the Syrian coast and again reached the Euphrates at Biricik by way of Aleppo.

of a family.²¹

Enroute to Baghdad, Stocqueler met Colonel Taylor, then Resident at Baghdad, who was fleeing the outbreak of plague with his family and servants and was enroute to the country residence upstream from Basra. Stocqueler was persuaded to turn back with Taylor. They found Basra deserted.

Apparently, Stocqueler learned much from Taylor and caught the then current local fever of enthusiasm for the opening of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers to steam navigation and commerce. Of the route of the rivers, Stocqueler expressed alarm at the "designs planned by the triumphant Paskevitch at Erzeroum; for communicating with India by the Tigris and Euphrates." He continued:

The utility of these noble streams as a channel of transport to the mouth of the Persian Gulf, will be evident to anyone who contemplates for a moment their geographical position. But how much more apparent their value as a medium for the dispatch from India of the materials of defensive warfare. Yet they would little avail us in the event of an approach from the North, while we remain without a commanding position at Baghdad That point being attained, the next question regards the establishment of steam vessels on the Tigris and Euphrates as a means of facilitating communication with India, and of thus conveying intelligence and military and with celerity and effect From inquiries instituted on the spot, I feel assured that its magnitude would completely annihilate the resources of much wealthier capitalists than those who could be found speculative enough to embark in the undertaking. It could only be successful entered upon by the British and Bombay Governments conjointly 22

.....

Stocqueler learned of, or foresaw, the need for "removal of rocks in the upper part of the Euphrates" which were "serious obstacles to general navigation." Conciliation of tribes inhabiting the banks of the rivers was

²¹J. H. Socqueler, Fifteen Months Pilgrimage through Untrodden Tracts of Khuzistance and Persia etc., . . . in the Years 1831 and 1832 (2 vols., London: Saunders and Otley, 1832), I, 30-32.

²²Ibid., pp. 54-55.

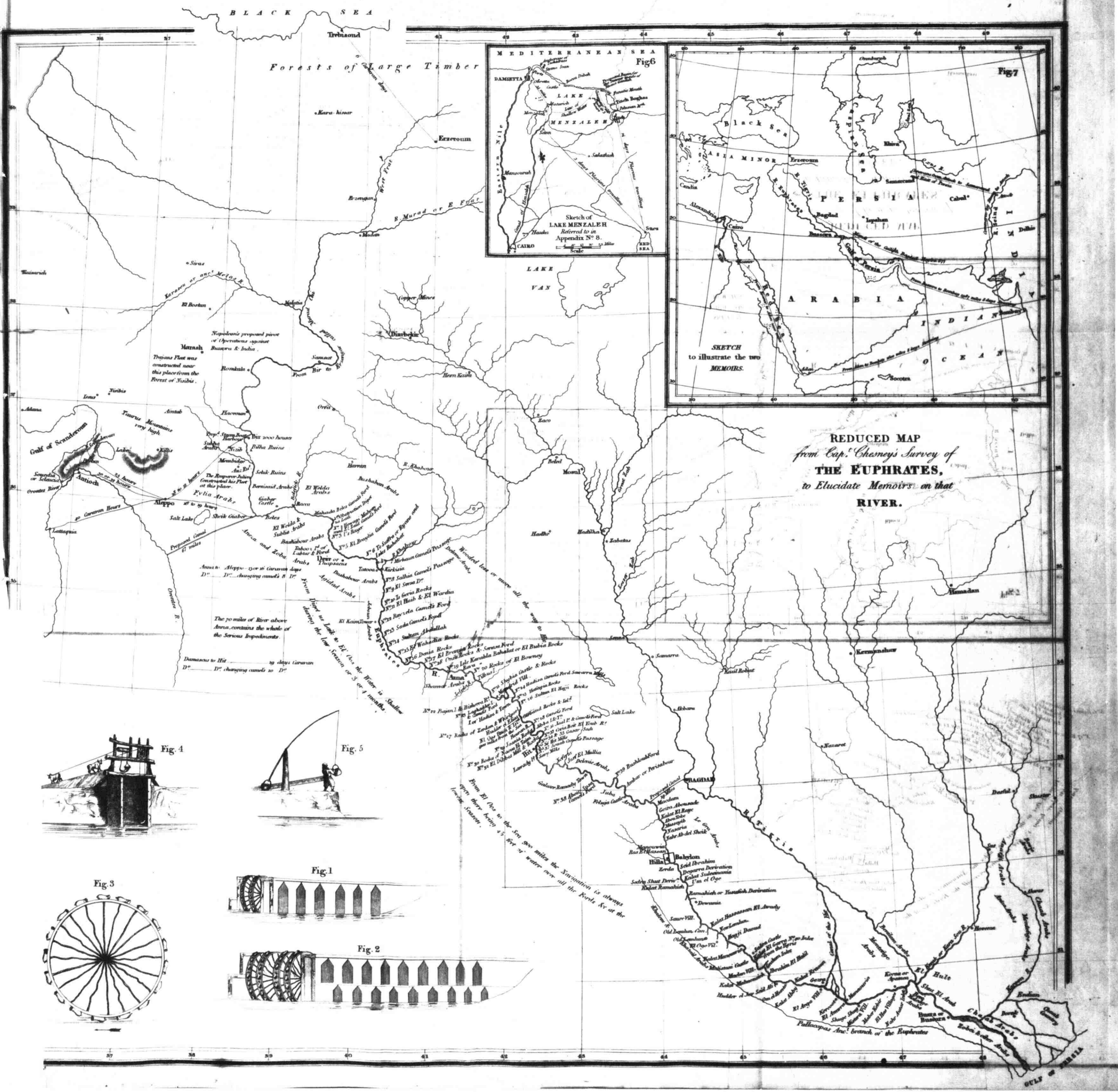
seen as another task. As to the design and equipment of steamers, he wrote: "I understand that a highly intelligent officer of the British Artillery who has been engaged in the surveying the Euphrates has invented a boat adapted to the navigation of the rivers Tigris and Euphrates."²³

It is with the activities of Stocqueler's "highly intelligent officer of the British Artillery," Captain Francis Rowden Chesney, and the efforts he inspired for the next two decades, that this study is next concerned.

²³Loc. cit.

PART II

FRANCIS ROWDEN CHESMEY AND THE EUPHRATES EXPEDITION



BLACK SEA



REDUCED MAP
from Cap. Cheneys Survey of
THE EUPHRATES,
to Elucidate Memoirs on that
RIVER.

Napoleon's proposed pivot
of Operations against
Bassora & India.
Troyans Fleet was
constructed near
this place from the
Forest of Naibis.

The 70 miles of River above
Aussa contains the whole of
the Serious Impediments.

Damascus to Hit 20 days Caravan
D° D° changing camels 8 D°

Fig 4

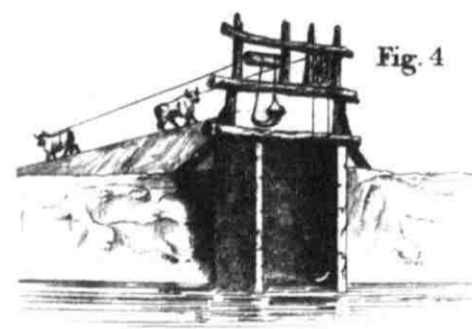


Fig 5

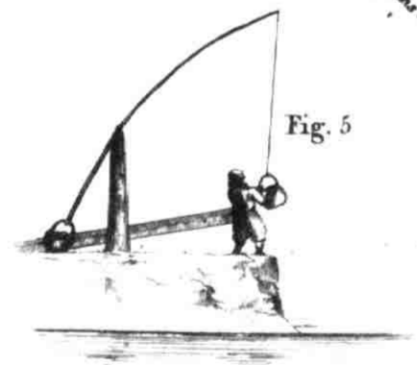


Fig 3

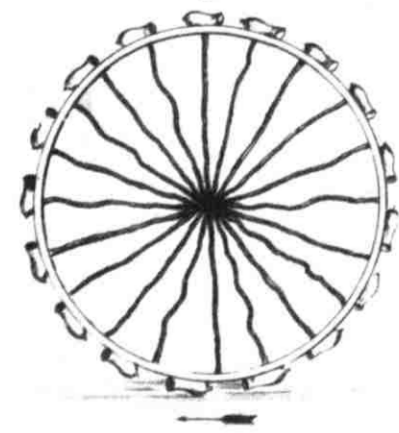


Fig 1

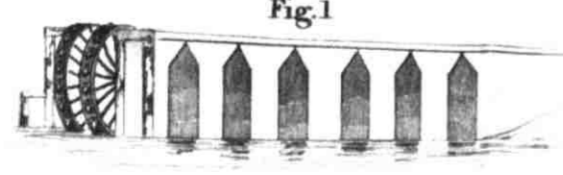
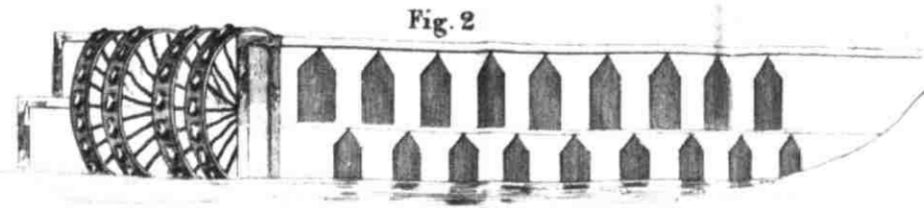


Fig 2



From Hit to the Sea 60 miles the Navigation is always
open there being a 2 feet of water over all the Rocks &c. at
low Water.

CHAPTER IV

CHESNEY'S FIRST TOUR--THE SCHEME CONCEIVED

A brief biography. --Francis Rowden Chesney was born in Ireland--of a Tory family which had been forced to flee its homestead on the Pacolet River in South Carolina--in 1789. At the age of sixteen, after two years at Woolwich, he was assigned to the Royal Artillery and, for the next twenty four years led a rather unspectacular career. Chesney, then, was forty years old when he began the adventures which were to occupy the greater period of his remaining life.

Spurned. --It is no novelty to history that things occur by reason of a seeming personal trifle, as witnessed in this work by Donald Campbell's flight from Aleppo¹ and Ormsby's venture into the slave trade.² According to his biographers, Captain Chesney left England as a volunteer for the Sultan's army in 1829 as a result of having been spurned by his love of long-standing, Miss Everilda Fraser. Having applied for and received leave of absence to go to Turkey, he departed London on 12 July 1829 in company with a British Army bombardier to present his plan of forming a rocket corps for defense of the higher passes of the Balkans. The Russian General Diebitsch, however, frustrated Chesney's plan by crossing the Balkans before

¹Campbell, loc. cit.

²Wellsted, op. cit., I, 56, 57.

the latter's arrival at Constantinople.³

Having observed the end of the Russo-Turkish War in September 1829, Chesney wintered at Constantinople and passed his time in writing a book on the campaigns of that war.⁴ It will have been noted that, though his arrival date at Constantinople is apparently not recorded, he could only have been present for its closing weeks.

Egypt. --In March 1830, having determined to visit Egypt and Palestine, Chesney called on Sir Robert Gordon, then His Majesty's Ambassador to the Porte, to make his plans known and to offer his services enroute. Gordon wanted information and offered to pay Chesney's expenses, requiring "chiefly to know whether the provinces were really in revolt or in state of defection. . . . I replied that I would undertake his commission I spoke of the fortresses in Asia, a line of separation from the Russians, as an object of future importance which he tacitly admitted, speaking . . . of the little prospect of our taking up the cause of the Turks, making it evident that he does not expect that we shall interfere."⁵ Chesney thereupon departed Constantinople on 5 April 1830, in a Turkish vessel bound for Smyrna, in company with Gordon's brother who was also travelling to Egypt. Mr. Gordon and Chesney, however, discovered that they were not compatible and parted company at Smyrna.⁶

³L.F. Chesney and J.C. O'Donell, The Life of the Late General F. R. Chesney by his Wife and Daughter, ed., Stanley Lane-Poole, (London: Longmans, Green, 1885), pp. 167, 171.

⁴Francis R. Chesney, The Russo-Turkish Campaigns of 1828-1829 (2nd ed.; London: Longmans, Green, 1854).

⁵Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 189.

⁶I cannot document this statement; it is a fact gained from reading on the subject, from a reliable primary source, and will justify its use here as Chesney's character is revealed.

Though Hoskins has Chesney travelling to Egypt for the purpose of surveying through communications facilities, neither Chesney's biographers nor Chesney himself confirm this.⁷ Chesney merely notes that his interest was stirred in communication with India while "being in Egypt, whither I had gone on a political mission from Sir Robert Gordon" ⁸

Chesney meets John Barker. --It is highly likely that Chesney's enthusiasm and, indeed, the idea of surveying and eventually of navigating the Euphrates came from John Barker, by 1830 British Consul General at Alexandria. Barker wrote, prior to meeting Chesney:

The Board of Control have sent me a string of questions which show that they are balancing the advantages and disadvantages of the two routes, namely that of Bussorah and Aleppo, and this channel for the transmission of their correspondence by steamers, in the supposition that the Euphrates might be navigable to steam vessels--a point which, I apprehend, there is no living man can decide, and which can be ascertained only by actual survey.⁹

Of his first meeting with Chesney, Barker wrote on 29 May 1830 from Alexandria: "I have just seen Captain Chesney, who brought me a letter He is a very intelligent, gentlemanly man, and pleased me much."¹⁰ In Barker's correspondence there is no further mention of Chesney during the latter's journies and work in Egypt.

Mr. Barker gave to Chesney the following list of questions he had received from Thomas Peacock, Principal examiner of the Board of Control for the East India Company:

⁸General Francis Rowden Chesney, Narrative of the Euphrates Expedition (London: Longmans, Green, 1868), p. 4.

⁹Barker, op. cit., II, 136.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 140.

Information respecting the road from Scanderoon to points in communication with India--i.e., from that place as well as from Lattaquia and Antioch, respectively, to Aleppo.

From Aleppo to Bir, and to Beles on the Euphrates.

The number of days required to perform the journey by each route, distinguishing between a journey to be performed by travellers with attendants, and one by an express messenger.

The comparative advantages of one or other of these routes, both as regards the probable security of travelling by the, and the superior expedition to be obtained.

Trade on the Euphrates; extent of it; in vessels or boats; their size and draught of water.

At what point navigation ceases.

At what point (if any) below Beles it would be possible to procure wood in sufficient quantity for steam navigation.

State of the tribes on the sides of the Euphrates, particularly the west side.

To what point might a steam-vessel mount the Euphrates ?

State of the harbours of Lattaquia and Scanderoon, and also of the month of the River Orontes.

Route from Aleppo by the Great Desert to Bussorah, and also by the Little Desert to Bagdad.

Information as to the number of days, means of obtaining despatch, and general security for travellers.¹¹

A proposal.--As early as 7 June, after his arrival in Alexandria on 29 May, Chesney had received the list of questions from Barker. And "Strongly impressed with the importance of these questions," he had proposed to the Government, "through Sir Robert Gordon, that I should make a personal examination of the several routes, and report the result." The responsibility for proceeding without authority, he took upon himself; he later wrote of this: "Taking for granted that this would be the wish of the Government, and that no difficulty about leave would be made, I at once commenced the task I had proposed to myself" ¹²

The Nile survey.--Captain Chesney proceeded up the Nile to Cairo and overland to Suez and Kossair, thence to Kenneh, on the Nile, and downstream to Damietta. He then surveyed the Isthmus and Lake Menzalah . . . "with a

¹¹Chesney, Narrative...., p. 5.

¹²Ibid., pp. 5, 364.

view to reporting on the practicability of carrying out the great project of a ship-canal" Chesney's survey did report the results of a French survey of 1802, which showed the Red Sea to be thirty-six feet higher than the Mediterranean, to be erroneous and he did report that it was, in his view, practicable--from an engineering stand point--to cut a canal across the Isthmus.¹³

To the Levant.--With what will later appear as characteristic haste, Chesney was able to complete his examination of the Nile, the Isthmus, and part of the Red Sea coast during the period 7 June to about 1 September; he had been able to reach Jaffa prior to 2 September at which port the foregoing report on the Overland Route via Egypt was written. .

Chesney's plan from Jaffa for his Euphrates survey was, after making an examination of the harbor at Jaffa, to take only a passing look at the lands east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. He wrote in his memoir: "My design was, after making a careful examination of the old tracks of caravans by Aleppo and Damascus, to proceed to Scanderoon, and thence to carry a couple of boats across to Bir; for, at first, I did not entertain the idea of crossing that part of the Desert of Arabia . . . by way of Palmyra." He also considered that from Bir he could examine the greater part of the Euphrates, and, the route from the sea to Bir being shortest in the north, it would be easier to transport his boats. He had intended to use the boats in the construction of a raft, on which he would descend the Euphrates.¹⁴

After proceeding from Jaffa to Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, Chesney turned north to the coast and to Beirut. From another traveler, we know

¹³Ibid., pp. 5, 10, 11. Letter to Sir Robert Gordon, 30 September 1830.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 12, 13.

that he spent several weeks in Beirut in September and October 1830. He was, with George Robinson, a guest at Broumana of Mr. Abbott, British Consul at Beirut, for some days after 26 September and travelled through Mount Lebanon on horseback accompanied by Robinson.¹⁵ It is probable from conditions in Syria and Lebanon at that time, he was continuing his political mission for Gordon. His wife and daughter wrote that he received letters at Beirut and that he remarked, in his writings, that, in September 1830 his scheme of descending the Euphrates was not encouraged by Sir Robert Gordon.¹⁶ Chesney, however, was not in the least deterred from his plans.

Of his initial impression of Chesney, Robinson wrote, in 1836:

I need, I believe, scarcely remind the reader that the person here spoken of is the distinguished officer and enterprising traveller now engaged in the 'Expedition on the Euphrates', and that whatever is to be attained by superior intelligence, indefatigable perseverance, and undaunted courage may be expected at his hands.¹⁷

Whatever transpired in the mails, Captain Chesney left Beirut on 14 October and proceeded to Baalbek and Damascus by way of Tripoli and the Cedars of Lebanon. Robinson says Chesney travelled by boat to Tripoli;¹⁸ Chesney writes a tongue-in-cheek tale of his near-end at the hands of some Arabs who were after his purse just north of Nahr-al-Kelb enroute to Tripoli on horseback.¹⁹ The journey by way of Tripoli and the Cedars had been inspired by Burckhardt.

A side trip.--On his arrival at Damascus, Chesney found there was no

¹⁵George Robinson, Three Years in the East (London: Henry Colburn, 1837), I, 7-13.

¹⁶Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 208.

¹⁷Robinson, op. cit., p. 376.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 39.

¹⁹Chesney, Narrative..., pp. 14-19.

immediate means of going north to Aleppo and, following his plan, on to the sea. Upon receipt from Mr. J.W. Ferren, British Consul at the Syrian Capital, of a copy of a Foreign Office plan to send mails to and from India via Basra, Baghdad, Hit, Damascus, and one of the nearer Mediterranean ports he took it upon himself to travel the country east and west of the Jordan;²⁰ this, he wrote, was to investigate any possible outweighing advantages of this longer land route over the "easier" ascent via the Euphrates and Aleppo. He again travelled in company with George Robinson, the two departing Damascus with a guide on 1 November 1830. In writings much less embellished with bravado and tales of danger at the hands of the Bedouins than those of Chesney, Robinson, still charmed with Chesney, described the trip south of Damascus as one in which, "under the guidance of so amiable and intelligent a traveller, I could but find pleasure and instruction."²¹ Chesney, however expressed himself in less glowing terms of Robinson when he accused Robinson, during a period of several days' captivity by the Anizah, of offering Chesney's head for ransom at Damascus. He did however praise the former's greater prudence in allaying his more risky and emotional proposals of escape which, Chesney later wrote, would probably have resulted in the deaths of them both.²²

Chesney borrowed money from an American, Mr. Samson, at Tiberias for the return to Damascus, which he reached on 29 November. He had now spent three months in travelling Palestine and Syria since his arrival at Jaffa.

To the Euphrates.—On 11 December, having secured a guide and camels

²⁰Chesney and O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 213.

²¹Robinson, op. cit., pp. 141-146.

²²Chesney, Narrative..., pp. 45-48.

through the offices of M. Baudin, the French Consul at Damascus, Chesney left Damascus, with a caravan enroute to Baghdad and Basra via Anna and Hit. Though in his memoir, it is not clear, it appears that he had abandoned the idea of proceeding to Aleppo because of a report that there was a wounded Englishman at Palmyra in need of assistance.²³ He proposed to detour, with assistance, from the caravan route to Palmyra for ten days to assist the remared wounded man. Chesney gave this as his reason for not proceeding north. At any rate, the caravan became lost and missed the track to Tadmor. Chesney had no choice but to continue on to the Euphrates. He had his first full view of the River on 25 December in the vicinity of Al Za'im and proceeded to Anah where he arrived after "nearly nineteen days' travelling" from Damascus, which put him at Anah about 29 December 1830, from which town a messenger was dispatched to the British Resident at Baghdad, Colonel Robert Taylor, announcing his safe arrival.²⁴

The Kelek.---Chesney left the caravan at Anah and enlisted the assistance of a sheikh there , who knew of the British Resident at Baghdad, in procuring guides and a raft for his descent of the river. He left Anah on 2 January 1831 accompanied by a guide, two oarsmen, and his dragoman and a slave-boy from Damascus.²⁵ The raft, or kelek, was and is one of the more common means of transportation downstream on the Upper Euphrates, much higher

²³Ibid., p. 50. The report later proved not true but was based on an incident which occurred on 29 September 1830 in which three of a party of five Englishmen were murdered near Mosul. This incident will be discussed fully later.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 61-65.

²⁵Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., pp. 227-229.

upstream than Anah, and particularly on the upper reaches of the Tigris. Constructed simply of a lacing of sapling trees for a deck, it gets its buoyancy from inflated goatskins or sheepskins which are fastened underneath the decking. The skins are kept wet above the water to prevent their cracking. Since there is no source of power other than the current of the river and no means of guidance other than with long sweeps or oars, the kelek is not used for upstream transportation. Historically, the practice has been to deflate the skins upon arrival at the downstream destination and to sell the brushwood deck, retaining the skins for return overland upstream, the skins to be used in construction of later rafts. The kelek provides comfortable and relatively safe transportation, particularly through rapidly moving waters and over rapids. It does require skill in handling through fast-moving and dangerous waters, however, and should not be used by the novice without the aid of an experienced kelekji. The kelek may be constructed of almost any maneuverable size, depending upon the cargo to be transported.²⁶ The size of Chesney's craft was described as being fourteen feet, six inches, by thirteen feet, six inches, supported by thirty-six skins, or one skin to about five square feet of deck space.²⁷

Hit.--Chesney arrived at Hit by kelek after an uneventful five days from Anah, during which he took hearings and soundings on the river. The five days' travel time at a total of only about 200 kilometers was enough

²⁶Among other kelek travellers in the Near East have been Helmuth von Moltke in 1838-39, on the Euphrates through the Taurus; Layard in 1840 on the Tigris; Sir Reader Bullard in 1907 on the Tigris. The writer and Captain Robert Perry, in 1964, went down the Euphrates through both the Anti Taurus and Taurus Mountains from Erzinca to Samsat; accounts of other voyages through both ranges have not been located.

²⁷Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 227.

for Chesney and he found faster transport from Hit in a bitumen-covered boat.²⁸ He left Hit on 9 January and arrived at Fallujah, 140 kilometers downstream on the third day.

At Fallujah, Chesney left his boat and crew to await his return from a visit to Taylor in Bahgdad, whence he travelled to report the rumor of the wounded man at Palmyra and to map that section of the river which he had just been over.

Encouragement.--Taylor was found to be quite sympathetic to the Euphrates enterprise and had, indeed, been for sometime interested and involved in the possibility of steam navigation on both the Tigris and the Euphrates.

An Anglican missionary at Baghdad, Arthur N. Groves, had written ecstatically in his journal on and after 12 June 1830:

A proposal has been made from an agent of the Bristol Steam Company to the Pasha, through Major Taylor, to have a steam vessel in the first place between Bussorah and this place; and secondly, if possible, to extend the navigation either by the old canal or by a new one, into the Euphrates and up to Beer . . . It will be a most important opening for missionaries; for should this mode of conveyance once get established, the route by Constantinople would almost cease, and some arrangement would soon be made for going from Scanderoon to the different important stations in the Mediterranean.

.
This place would become a frontier post of Christian labour, from which we might daily hope to send forth labourers to China, India and elsewhere, and the work of publishing the testimony of Jesus be accomplished before the Lord come.²⁸

Chesney found that Taylor was to send off Ormsby, assisted by Elliot, to survey the lower Euphrates after the massacre on 29 September 1830 near Mosul, of Lieutenant Bowater, James Taylor, and a Mr. Aspinall while enroute to Biricik. Bowater and Taylor, assisted by Elliot, were to have surveyed

²⁸Anthony N. Groves, Journal of a Residence at Baghdad during the Years 1830 and 1831 (London: James Nisbet, 1832), pp. 3, 4, 12.

the Euphrates from that point in answer to the questions of interest to the East India Company.²⁹ There had been another Englishman travelling with them toward Constantinople, a Mr. Hull, who, alone with Elliot, escaped and reached Aleppo on 11 January 1831.³⁰ From Elliot, Ormsby got an account of the circumstances of the massacre which he entered in his memoir:

Four British officers had debarked at Busrah, to proceed by the couriér route to Constantinople. They reached in safety a small town, and there, with the same recklessness and ignorance of the character of the people which marks the mere Englishman in those countries, they paraded the bazaars with their bags of gold sequins, paying exorbitant prices for articles they could have little need of They were attacked by a party who had preceded, and there lain in wait for them. Had they quietly paused to remonstrate before proceeding to hostilities, they might have escaped with the loss of their poperty, but one of their number, allowing his feelings of anger to overcome those of his prudence, shot dead the son of the Sheikh. In a few minutes, the whole of the party, with the exception of 2 disguised as Mohamedans, were cut to pieces; the latter joined in with, and fled with, the other natives who had, for the benefit of their protection, joined the English party. On their retreat, they could hear the shrieks of the victims whose throats were cut on the banks of the river. One of these unfortunates was the brother of the British resident, but so little does the influence even of the British name extend to these warlike tribes that no satisfaction has ever been conceded for the outrage.³¹

Of Bowater and Taylor, Groves had written earlier. In a journal entry for 12 June 1830, he wrote: "There is a gentleman here on his return to England, a Mr. Bywater, [sic] , whom Mr. Taylor wishes to undertake a survey of the Euphrates from Beer to the canal, which connects it with this place. Till within about twenty years, heavy artillery came to this place by that river," ³²

²⁹ Supra, pp. 36, 37.

³⁰ Groves, op. cit., p. 78.

³¹ Wellsted, op. cit., pp. 176, 177. A vaguely disguised account.

³² Groves, op. cit., p. 4.

Groves wrote further on 26 June:

Attention has again been directed to the subject of steam navigation between Bombay and England, by the arrival of Mr. James Taylor from Bombay. This gentleman has been engaged for some time in undertaking to effect steam communication by the Red Sea, but difficulties arising, he determined to come by way of the Persian Gulf and this city, and to cross the desert. On his arrival here, he was made acquainted with the previous plans for steam navigation on these rivers; and he quickly perceived that if the rivers were navigable, and no other difficulty arose, the preference must be given to this route, as being . . . shorter³³

Enthusiasm appears to have captured the isolated little English community in that summer of 1830 as Groves continued on 12 July: "Colonization appears to have entered into the contemplation of those engaged in steam navigation, and the planting of indigo and sugar. To this end, the Pasha has granted them 30 miles of land on the banks of the river."³⁴

In September of the same year, it was reported to Taylor by the Musraf, treasurer, of the Pashalic that work had already begun on a canal between the two rivers. There was no evidence of this work in later exploration of the Suglawiya Canal, which leaves the Euphrates for Baghdad just north of Fellujah.

Probably having to do with the same enthusiasm, Chesney, without ever revealing the nature of the business, wrote to his father during his story in Baghdad: "I have had what might be not only called tempting, but magnificent offers to remain here to accomplish some objects of Government; but to separate myself from my child and you all for a protracted time I could not bring myself to do for even the united temptations of money and ambition."³⁵

³³Ibid., p. 10

³⁴Ibid., p. 17.

³⁵Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 233. Chesney had a daughter, Jane, by his first wife who died in 1825 at Gibraltar while Chesney was assigned there.

Chesney, when he learned of the efforts at the Euphrates survey being made by Taylor and of the assignment of Ormsby and Elliot to the task, very nearly gave up the completion of his journey. He was, however, encouraged by Taylor to continue and remained in Baghdad only to complete work on his first map, at which work he was interrupted by an epidemic of plague in Baghdad and left for Fallujah and the remainder of his survey in early April 1831. Ormsby and Elliot had already departed on their mission and Taylor had left with his family to escape the plague at Basra.

Chesney had reported by letter to Sir Robert Gordon at Constantinople on 25 January 1831 on his travels from Damascus. He reported the river open to navigation as far upstream as Hit, and, with moderate difficulty, to Anah. He did say that there were obstacles, the rock shelf at Rawah, above Anah which must be removed to make the river navigable above that place.³⁶

Back to the river.--Arriving at Fallujah, Chesney found that his boat had been destroyed by a storm and, after some days spent replacing that, resumed his downstream survey on 10 April. It is worth mentioning that on his first night out of Fallujah, Chesney met trouble between warring factions of the Zoba [sic] and Shammar tribes as Robert Perry met in the same stretch of the river, between neighboring villages in September 1964, a hundred and thirty-three years later.³⁷

On the twelfth of April, Chesney arrived at Hillah where he met his friend Martinelli, an Italian, whom Chesney had known at Baghdad, who was among the Pasha's trusted officers. Martinelli was later a cavalry instructor at Damascus under Ibrahim.

³⁶F.R. Chesney, Reports of the Navigation of the Euphrates (London: 1833), no page.

³⁷Chesney, Narrative..., p. 86.

Chesney also found at Hillah that Major Taylor had sent the Residency schooner to take him down to Basra in greater comfort.³⁸

Chesney will appear destined to have difficulty always at Lamlum, and on this, his first voyage through, the attitude of the people toward the law and firmans from Baghdad were about what they appear from personal observation to be today; Chesney claimed to have been robbed of all but a little silver and his watch. His boat was sunk in a sudden squall south of Lamlum but, baled out, he reached Suq-as-Shuyuk.³⁹ There he met Stocqueler. Stocqueler will be remembered as an early enthusiast of steam navigation on both the Tigris and the Euphrates in opposition to Russia designs. Stocqueler, though he mentioned Chesney's efforts of 1830-31, did not record his name or that the meeting took place.⁴⁰

The residency boat anchored at Basra on 26 April 1831, after a rapid survey of seventeen days.⁴¹ This was a stretch of river which, in 1964, required twelve days, under circumstances of running from low water with a small boat powered by two eighteen horsepower motors. Chesney had precious little time to survey the river.

A Detour.--The Great Desert Route being closed--due to plague--for his return north to survey the upper reaches of the Euphrates, Chesney was forced to travel through Persia and thence to Asia Minor. He arrived off Basra on 5 May 1831 to find that port closed to travellers coming from plague-infested areas. The British Resident, Captain Hennell, however, secured a local boat

³⁸Ibid., p. 234.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 91-93.

⁴⁰Supra, p. 31.

⁴¹He had departed Fallujah on 10 April.

which took Chesney back to Mohammarah, from whence he travelled up the Karun and overland to Ahvaz. Enroute to Shuster, he was robbed again, fortunately to be befriended and relieved by the local Khan, Mirza Abdullah.

At Shuster, while awaiting a caravan for Kermanshah, Chesney busied himself preparing his map of the Lower Euphrates. In a letter of 3 June 1831 to Sir Robert Gordon, forwarded with the maps, Chesney reported that because of risings among the tribes, Ormsby and Elliot had gotten only as far as Hillah on their survey.⁴²

While still awaiting a caravan Chesney explored Khuzistan. Having become ill, he turned back from his efforts to reach Kermanshah and returned to Bushire where he recuperated until 26 July under the hospitality of Hennell.

Recovered, Chesney left Bushire on the twenty-seventh of July with a Pole, De Borowski, who was enroute from India to join the service of the Shah. They travelled from Bushire to Shiraz, Isfahan and Tabriz, part of the way with the army of the future Shah, Prince Abbas Mirza. Before Tabriz, they were entertained at the encampment of the British Ambassador, Captain John N.R. Campbell whose mission had fled Tabriz because of plague. Here, also, Chesney met Sir John McNeill and Lieutenant Henry Blosse Lynch of the Indian Navy, both of whom were to play important roles in his future.⁴³

Asia Minor.--With the coming of cooler weather and the lessening of the threat of plague, Chesney joined the British Mission in its return to Tabriz, where he continued to enjoy the hospitality of Captain and Mrs. Campbell until he set off for Erzerum and Trabizond on 12 December in

⁴²Chesney, Reports . . ., no page.

⁴³Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., pp. 241-245.

company with a Tatar.⁴⁴ It may be superfluous to say here that he certainly avoided the continuance of his travels in the best fall weather in order to travel the deep snows of Asia Minor in the dead of winter. There is a thread of poor judgment in these and later adventures which will unravel as the narrative is spun.

At Erzerum, Chesney was entertained for several days at the Consulate before proceeding on 26 December across the mountains to Trabizond, which he reached on the thirty-first. After a period of preparation for his survey of the Upper Euphrates, he retraced his steps to the plain of Ashkale and travelled to Aleppo by way of Sivas, Kayseri, and Ain Tab. Why he skirted the river in the Anti-Taurus is not explained, but there are several hundred miles of the Euphrates which, though not wholly navigable, were accessible for survey by raft, foot, and horse at lower elevations than those he had already traversed in Azerbaijan and Armenia. When he later wrote to Miss Fraser from Aleppo on 16 March 1832 that he "was rather turned out of my way by the state of warfare between the Pasha of Egypt and the Sultan," he had to be referring to a situation rather far removed, for those days, from the Euphrates and the route through Anatolia to Aleppo.⁴⁵

In this survey, Chesney also failed to survey the river between Beles and Anah and even south of Biricik. He wrote in his memoir: "The dread of the Arabs made it almost impossible to procure guides and animals to go thither, and I was reluctantly obliged to take the route of Bir."⁴⁶ He did, with Richard Langton, another English traveler go up the river as far as Samsat, thence to Urfa, and returned to Aleppo by way of Biricik.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 246.

⁴⁵Chesney and O'Donnell, op. cit., p. 248.

⁴⁶Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 136.

Chesney found a great deal of support from the European mercantile community of Aleppo, which, especially since the dissolution of the Levant Company in 1825, had suffered a considerable decline in trade which had intensified with the troubles between the Sultan and the Viceroy of Egypt.

Finally making his way back to Constantinople, Chesney, with Richard Langton, visited the Bays of Iskenderun and Antioch and examined the port of Seleucia.

Homeward turning.--Sir Robert Gordon had been succeeded as British Ambassador to the Porte by Stratford Canning, a Russophobe, and Chesney found in Canning, upon his return to Constantinople on 23 April 1832, a staunch supporter of what had now become his own scheme of a steam route to India via the Euphrates. He remained three months in Constantinople and arrived in London on 26 September 1832 in the full expectation that the scheme would be, ". . . warmly taken up in England and carried into effect with lasting benefit to old England."⁴⁷

⁴⁷Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., pp. 249-250.

CHAPTER V

CHESNEY IN LONDON--GROWTH OF AN IDEA

A lion in London.--News of his efforts and adventures having travelled ahead of him, Chesney returned to find himself "a lion in London."¹

Publicizing.--The years 1832-34, turbid as they were for England in the East, were fortunate ones for Chesney's scheme. His time was spent in consolidating the materials he had sent during his travels to Sir Robert Gordon and, through Taylor at Baghdad, to the East India Company. At the urging of Thomas Peacock, his reports and conclusions were published by the Government in 1833.²

Published with his memoir was a list concerning the relative advantages of the Red Sea and Euphrates routes, reproduced in full as follows:

In favour of the Red Sea
and Nile

Shorter sea in reaching
Alexandria than Scanderoon from
Bombay during the low season of
the Euphrates

Equal time by Egypt to Bombay
when the river is low, Entire

In favour of the Euphrates

A shorter distance by 170 miles
through the Persian Gulf than Egypt.

Half the time exposed to the open
sea and monsoon; say five days less
by the Persian Gulf.

Equal time by the Euphrates to
Bombay when low.

¹Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 250.

²Chesney, Reports It is interesting to note that, though when first he strayed from his original political mission while in Egypt, his investigations included the Isthmus of Suez, the Red Sea, and the Nile, there is no mention of these in Chesney's title.

security in travelling through Egypt; whereas on the Euphrates the steamers must be constantly prepared to risk attacks night and day.

A shorter distance to navigate on the Nile, and without Fords or rocks as in the Euphrates, where tribute is demanded by almost every tribe.

Less expense for sailors, arms and ammunition by the Nile, where eight or ten men would be sufficient and twenty are requisite for the steamer on the Euphrates.

Less coals by three days' consumption required in leaving Bombay for Muscat than for Aden; that is whilst in the open sea. Wood, charcoal, bitumen, and naphtha are to be had along the Euphrates, whilst Egypt has neither wood nor coal, and but little charcoal.

The effects of the monsoon would be less formidable, especially by keeping along the Makran coast, than when going to Egypt.

The expense of the fuel would be little along the Euphrates, even if the naphtha be not answerable; and if it be found available, the cost by sea will also be very small.

The prospect of gradually civilising the Arabs, of increasing facilities to our commerce, and also strengthening the hands of the Sultan in the Pashalik by inducing the Pasha to attend to the defence of the Euphrates and Tigris, which, as they now are, offer an easy and irresistible inlet to a norther enemy.

In addition to commercial and defensive advantages against an enemy, the line of the Euphrates would give a more rapid intercourse with Persia, both from England, and India, etc.³

In fairness to Chesney, it should be pointed out that he had fully reported to Gordon on his surveys, no matter how brief, in Egypt.⁴ And, further, with reference to the later cutting of a canal across the Isthmus of Suez, in his letter to Gordon from Jaffa on 2 September 1830 he had written:

.....

Any of these routes, however, which may be adopted, will probably

³Chesney and O'Donell, *op. cit.*, pp.255, 256.

⁴*Supra*, p. 38.

only pave the way to the realisation of the grand idea so long indulged in England and in other parts of Europe of connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea; a little time will probably remove the ill-founded impression of increasing the height of the former by the influx of the latter The expense would be a moderate one for a single nation, and scarcely worth dividing between the great Kingdoms of Europe, who would all benefit by the measure.⁵

.....

A copy of the published work was sent by Chesney to Sir Stratford Canning, by then at Paris, who sent it on to Palmerston.⁶ Palmerston, though in favour of the scheme of navigating the Euphrates, avoided Chesney and any public connection with the project for fear of upsetting the "Continental Powers" at such a time of crisis in Turkey.⁷

A friend at Court.--Growing support for the Euphrates line resulted, on 16 April 1833, in an audience at St. James's Palace with King William IV. Chesney had been advised by a friend to be quick with his answers to the King and that, if he were, "His Majesty will never forget their bearings."⁸ The King became a staunch supporter of Chesney's project of an experimental steam expedition to the Euphrates.⁹ It was through the King's instigation that, instead of through Palmerston, (due to the political implications of routes to India through Egypt or Syria), it was arranged that the matter of overland routes to India should be brought before the House of Lords by Lord Lansdowne,

⁵Chesney, Narrative, pp. 372, 373.

⁶Chesney and O'Donnell, op. cit., pp. 252, 253.

⁷Ibid., pp. 258, 259.

⁸Chesney, Narrative, pp. 144, 145.

⁹Chesney, Reports, p. 59. Chesney had proposed using three steamers, a large one to Hit, a smaller one to a point above Anah, and another larger one above the rocks at Anah.

a supporter, and before the House of Commons by Charles Grant, President of the Board of Control for the East India Company; both were Cabinet Ministers.

A delay.---Events in Turkey in 1833 intervened to prevent early action on any proposals dealing with positive actions on the part of the English in the East.¹⁰

The Steam Committee.---The situation in Turkey had modified somewhat with the withdrawal of Russian forces, and a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Steam Navigation sat for hearings in London beginning 9 June 1834 and published its report on 14 July.

Chesney was among the first witnesses to be called before the Steam Committee. He wrote to his father on 30 January 1834:

At one, the long locked-for Committee. The political hearings of Persia and the Euphrates, the march of Russia, etc., were gone into, then the stem of both lines. The importance of a flotilla of armed steamers at Bombay. They seemed to lean to the Euphrates decidedly.¹¹

On 27 June: "Sir Harford Brydges was examined; and his evidence, on which I had relied to show the importance of steam by the Euphrates and of Baghdad, was a complete disappointment . . . even as a point of attack on India, Basrah seemed of no consequence."¹² In later testimony, Chesney had

¹⁰Chesney, ever the opportunist and ever the imperialist, bided his time during this delay by drawing up, and sending to the King, plans for a land and naval movement to force the Dardanelles. He discussed those plans in a letter of 8 April 1864: "Finished on plans of a steam movement against the Dardanelles, the castles either to be carried by a simultaneous march on both sides for two miles, or merely a position taken up until the morning." Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 271.

¹¹Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 269.

¹²Ibid., p. 272. The East India Company, in particular, was concerned about Russia's encroachments to the south. Chesney had been asked by Thomas Peacock whether he "thought Persia was a Russian province, and how soon there will be a Russian docky and fleet at Basrah supplied with timber floated from Armenia." Ibid., p. 265.

tried to show that, although the Red Sea route, and, eventually, a canal were practicable for England, England had more to gain from the Euphrates route than from a ship canal across the Isthmus of Suez, militarily and commercially. He also promoted the possibility of a ship canal from the mouth of the Orontes River to the Euphrates.¹³

Throughout the proceedings of the Committee, there never seemed to be any doubt as to the continued use of the Red Sea route, though each route had its outspoken advocates. Peacock, relying on Chesney's reports on the river, for the Board of Control, argued the strategic value of the Euphrates route as a hedge against Russian expansion through Persia to India and, further, the Board considered the Euphrates route to be far cheaper.¹⁴ Sir Harford Jones Bridges's testimony, in effect, has been given above.

The Committee Reports.--The Committee's resolutions reported to the House of Commons were, on the whole, favorable to both the Euphrates and the Red Sea routes but provided funds and specific proposals for only the further exploration of the River route. There were twelve specific resolutions which may be summarized as follows:

1. That regular and expeditions communication with India by means of steam vessels is an object of great importance to Great Britain and to India.
2. That the Bombay to Suez passage had been tested for five successive seasons and that it had been established that the Red Sea route was satisfactory during the northeast monsoon.
3. That it appeared, the route of the Red Sea not having been tried for the period of the southwest monsoon, in June, July, August, and

¹³Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers (1834), No. 478, Report from the Select Committee on Steam Navigation, pp. 49, 50.

¹⁴See Charles Grant's "Memorandum on Settlement at the Bay of Scanderoon," op. cit.

September that that route provided communication for eight months of the year.

4. That measures should be taken for the establishment of regular steam communication from India by way of the Red Sea.

5. That such establishment was the responsibility of His Majesty's Government and the East India Company at Bombay or Calcutta or by the plan.

6. That the cost of land conveyance from the Euphrates or the Red Sea to the Mediterranean appeared about the same.

7. That, though steam navigation had not been tried in the Persian Gulf, it appeared that the route from Bombay to Basra was satisfactory the year round.

8. That it appeared the Euphrates, from Bir to the Persian Gulf was navigable at least eight months of the year. The remaining four months' period, November through February, was not excepted but judgment was reserved for results of further examination.

9. That unquiet in the country could be surmounted by negotiation with the Porte, Mehmet Ali, and the chiefs of principal fixed tribes. (*Italics mine*). Further that such negotiation should be put to a test.

10. That an effective trial should be made of both lines operating for the twelve months of a year from the Mediterranean, using the routes alternatively with regard to the seasons in order to provide the needed year round communication.

11. That the regular voyages of the Malta Packets should be extended to such parts of Egypt and Syria as would complete communication.

12. That the House of Commons should appropriate the sum of 20,000 L. for the experiment of the Euphrates route.¹⁵

Parliament acts.--The Committee's Report was brought to the floor of the House of Commons by Charles Grant on 4 August 1834. Grant summarized the Report; in calling for a favorable note on the appropriation of 20,000 pounds for a steam survey of the Euphrates he was supported by James S. Buckingham. The matter was carried favorably with no effective opposition.¹⁶

Chesney, himself, gratified as he was that the Euphrates route was to be tested, expressed his disappointment that, though the Committee had urged establishment of regular steam communication with India by the Red Sea route, nothing was done in its promotion at the same time.¹⁷

¹⁵Parliamentary Papers (1834), No. 478, p. 2.

¹⁶Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, XXV (1835), 930-932.

¹⁷Chesney and O'Donell, *op. cit.*, p. 273, 274.

A Royal Command.---In the matter of the actual mounting and command of the experiment on the Euphrates, Chesney represents that he declined, for family reasons, the initial offer of the command through Charles Grant. On being told later that a second choice had also declined, Chesney agreed to serve and was appointed by the King.¹⁸ Chesney served without pay and, as will later be seen, actually expended a considerable amount of his own funds in support of the Expedition.

¹⁸Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 149.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSPORT TO THE EUPHRATES

Staging

Preparations.--In the fall of 1834, preparations were made for the organization, equipment, and departure of the Euphrates Expedition.

Two iron river steamers were ordered to be built by the Messrs. Laird and Company at Birkenhead. The larger of the steamers, called Euphrates, was 108 feet long with a nineteen foot beam. It was powered by two twenty-five horsepower engines. The smaller, Tigris, was sixty-eight feet in length, fifteen feet in the beam, with two ten horsepower engines. Both steamers came fully furnished and equipped at prices of 6,093 L. for the Euphrates and 2,040 L. for the Tigris.¹

Mission to be accomplished.--Chesney's selection and training of personnel and selection of additional equipment were based on the objective which he had laid down for the Expedition. They were four:

1st, The conveyance of the materials for the two steam-vessels to the coast of Syria, and the process of landing them there.

2ndly, The means of transporting the boilers, engines, and other equipments, from the seacoast to the banks of the Euphrates, a distance of 137 miles.

3rdly, To prepare temporary docks and slips, . . . , in order to set up and float the vessels.

4thly, To survey the seacoast, the line across Northern Syria, and

¹Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers (1838), No.540, Papers Relating to the Euphrates Expedition, p. 70. Of funds, Chesney was later to write rather quaintly: "The funds--which in a popular government occupy too much attention, and are rarely obtained without much difficulty--were chiefly supplied by the Treasury; and on this department I was authorised to draw. . . . The East India Company was, however, to contribute 5000 L. . . ." That brought the total allocation, in 1834, to 25,000 L. Chesney, Narrative . . . , p. 151.

eventually the Rivers Euphrates, Tigris, and Karun.²

Top people.--The officers of the Expedition seem to have performed admirably and their future records auger well for the discipline of their two-year adventure in the East. His two ranking assistants bear notice at this time. Major J.B.B. Estcourt, Infantry, was Executive and Survey Officer. He sat in Parliament from 1848 to 1852, and later served and died of cholera as Adjutant General--Major General--of British forces in Crimea. He was knighted before news of his death reached England.³ Lieutenant Henry Blosse Lynch, Indian Navy, had been Arabic and Persian interpreter to the Commodore of the Persian Gulf Squadron of the Indian Navy. He had participated in the Indian Navy survey of the Persian Gulf and, from 1830 to 1832, commanded the steamer Enterprise off south Persia under orders of Sir John MacDonalld at Teheran.⁴ He was in that command, then, when Chesney first met him at Tabriz. Lynch was later to serve as Chesney's successor with the revived Euphrates Expedition, and as officiating Superintendent of the Indian Navy.⁵ He was also to remain, for the rest of his life, directly involved in steam navigation of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers.

Advance party.--In November, Lieutenant Lynch was sent to Syria to hire draft animals for the overland journey to the Euphrates and to make other arrangements for the arrival of the main body of the Expedition.

²Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 151. Chesney had designated the port of Seleucia, (Suedia), at the mouth of the Orontes, as the point of debarkation for the Expedition.

³Ibid., pp. 541-543.

⁴Low, op. cit., II, 35. At that time, diplomatic affairs with Persia were still the primary responsibility of the Indian Government. This remained so only until 1833.

⁵Chesney, Narrative . . ., App. XII, pp. 547, 548.

Colonel Chesney.--Preparations continuing, Chesney was again interviewed by the King on 19 November; on the twenty-eighth, he received his formal commission and instructions through the Duke of Wellington, Foreign Minister in Peel's temporary government, and Lord Ellenborough, the new President of the Board of Control for India:

I transmit to you herewith a Commission . . . to Captain Chesney, R.A., constituting and appointing him, with the rank of Colonel on a particular service, to be a Commander of the Expedition about to be undertaken for the establishment of a communication between the Mediterranean Sea and His Majesty's possessions in the East Indies by means of a steam communication of the River Euphrates, in conformity with the recommendation of the Committee of the House of Commons to that effect.

I am at the same time commanded by the King to signify to you His Majesty's pleasure that an instruction to the following effect be addressed to Colonel Chesney:

As the object of the House of Commons in appropriating a large sum of money to be employed by His Majesty for the purposes of this Expedition was the promotion of the commerce and general interests of His Majesty's subjects, it will be Colonel Chesney's first duty to use every exertion to secure the success of the Expedition in the shortest possible time, and always to bear in mind the necessity of making his arrangements in such a manner as that their utility may be permanent in the event of his success.

Colonel Chesney will further be careful to maintain the most perfect discipline and subordination among the persons who compose the expedition.⁶

It will be the duty of Colonel Chesney, . . . to conciliate to the utmost of his power the friendship and good will, not only of the authorities of the Grand Seignior, but of the different Communities and tribes with which he may have contact

In short, Colonel Chesney is always to bear in mind that the character of the Expedition is one of peace; that it is undertaken with the permission of a friendly Power, . . . and that . . . it is only to be conducted by peaceful means.

Colonel Chesney will find His Majesty's Ambassador to the Porte unstructed to afford him all possible assistance in the way of representation to the Turkish Government on any occasion . . . its authority is required

Lastly, Colonel Chesney will report from time to time, . . . the progress and prospects of the Expedition.⁷

The firman.--Lord Ponsonby, then Ambassador to the Porte had been

⁶Chesney never received full courts martial jurisdiction over the personnel of the Expedition. This was later to cause him some consternation.

⁷Parliamentary Papers (1838), No. 540, p. 5.

instructed to secure the proper authority for the Expedition from the Sultan. Under the impression that the Porte had disapproved the project, Lord Ellenborough was, in December, while the personnel and equipment were marshalling at Liverpool, about to break up the Expedition when he learned Ponsonby had won approval at Constantinople and that Chesney was free to proceed. The Sultan's firman to his subordinates with reference to the Expedition and dated 29 December 1834, read:

To their Excellencies the Viziers, Pashas of three tails, to the illustrious Miri Mirans, Pashas of two tails, to the learned Judges, to the Wainadas, Captains of Ports, and other Majistrates of places situated on both banks of the Euphrates, health.

On receiving the imperial command, you will know as follows:--The Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary of Great Britain at Constantinople, Lord Ponsonby, one of the most illustrious personages among the Christian nations, has presented at our Sublime Porte an official note, by which he intimates that the British Government requires permission to cause to navigate by turns two steam boats on the river Euphrates which flows at a small distance from the city of Baghdad, for the purpose of facilitating commerce.

We in consequence issued to our very illustrious governor of Baghdad and Bussora, Ali Reza Pasha, an order to furnish our Sublime Porte with information of the proposed navigation.⁸

Although the answer of the Pasha had not arrived, the Ambassador made representations on this point, informing our Sublime Porte the British Government awaited our reply.

For this reason we have and do permit two steam boats to navigate the Euphrates by turns, and this navigation is to continue as long as, conformably to what has been represented to us, it may prove useful to the two powers, and no inconvenience result therefrom, and it is to this purpose that an official rule has been transmitted to the British Ambassador.

A firman couched in the same terms has been addressed to the Pasha of Baghdad and Bussora.⁹

⁸Ali Riza Pasha had, on command of the Sultan, replaced Daoud Pasha; this was done forcibly by seige of Daoud Pasha's palace, his troops, including those 1000 trained by Taylor, having been decimated by plague.

⁹C.U. Aitchison, comp., A Collection of Treaties, Engagements, and Relating to India and Neighboring Countries (4th ed.; Calcutta: 1909), XIII, 16, 17; translation quoted in J.C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in The Near and Middle East (2 vols., Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1956), I, 109, 110.

Final Instructions.--As the Expedition continued to organize at Liverpool, Colonel Chesney received his final instructions from Lord Ellenborough which were contained in Ellenborough's letter of 24 January 1835:

It does not appear necessary to give you any further instructions for your general guidance in the prosecution of the object of the Expedition under your command, beyond those which you have already received from the Duke of Wellington.

The Minute of the Lords Commissioner of His Majesty's Treasury, which has been communicated to you, points out the mode in which you are to draw for the necessary funds.

You have been already informed that His Majesty's Government cannot apply to Parliament for any grant in addition to that of 20,000 l. which has been so liberally made, for the purpose of ascertaining the practicability of navigating the Euphrates.

You will always bear in mind that that is the one object of your Expedition, and that scientific enquiries, however interesting, are not to be allowed to detain you.

This caution is become the more necessary, since you leave England at a period subsequent to that at which it was first calculated by you that you would arrive at the mouth of the Orontes.

Should you arrive at Basrah by descending the Euphrates, you will consider yourself to be under the command of the Bombay Government. You will immediately on your arrival repair and refit your steamboats, so as to be enabled to execute any orders you may receive.

In the event of the season being favourable for the voyage to Bombay, you are at liberty to proceed at once to that port. This measure may possibly be rendered advisable by the consideration due to the health of the officers and men under your command.

Such of the officers and men as the Bombay Government may not deem it necessary to retain for the purpose of repairing the steamboats, or of the further prosecution of the plan of navigating the Euphrates, will immediately proceed to England.

Should the Bombay Government decide upon prosecuting the navigation of the Euphrates, and the steamboats be despatched for Basrah at an early period, that Government is empowered to afford, to such of the officers and men who desire it, the opportunity of returning to England by the way of the Euphrates on the steamboats.

In the event of your finding it impracticable to convey the steamboats from the mouth of the Orontes to the Euphrates, and of your abandoning the project of descending that river on that or any other ground, you are at liberty to proceed with the steamboats to Bombay.

On your arrival at Bombay, you will place yourself under the orders of the Bombay Government.

Immediately on your arrival on the Euphrates with the materials of the steamboats, you will communicate to the Bombay Government every particular you may think necessary, in order to enable them to judge of the probable time of your reaching Basrah, and to take measures for sending a steam-vessel, or a vessel of the Indian Navy, to meet you there,

and to convey instructions to you.¹⁰

The Long Haul

Stormy departure.--The Euphrates Expedition, its equipment and personnel loaded on the merchant sailing vessel George Canning, departed Liverpool, characteristically it would appear, in a storm on 10 February 1835. Enroute to the open sea, provisions for "two or three years" were furnished from Government stores.¹¹ The ship left Cork Harbour on 16 February and arrived at Malta on 12 March having lost the Royal Navy steamer Alban, sent by the Government to expedite the landing in Syria, on the first day out.

Malta and Cyprus.--Arrived at Malta, where Chesney was to secure further assistance and stores from the Navy, it was found that instructions had not arrived to that effect and there were delays. While at Malta, the Expedition engaged Christian Rassam, a Nestorian Christian of Mosul, as Chief interpreter, and twelve other Maltese to serve as interpreters. On the twentieth of March, flat boats for the landing and other supplies secured, the Alban still missing, Chesney was furnished the escort and assistance of the sloop-of-war Columbine at Malta and proceeded to Cyprus, a nine--day voyage. Arrived at Cyprus, it was learned that there was plague ashore. Leaving the George Canning standing off Cyprus, Chesney proceeded in the Columbine to Beirut where, having spoken with the British Consul, by then Mr. Chasseau, he learned that the coast of Syria was free of plague and that

¹⁰Parliamentary Papers (1838), No. 540, p. 6.

¹¹Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 166. Rassam was later to become Vice Consul for many years at Mosul. It is also, for future reference, worth mentioning here that at Malta "some time was devoted to the determination of the intensity of magnetic forces, and the amount of the dip of the needle. Ibid., p. 166.

and that Lynch had completed arrangements at Suedia for reception of the party.

Arrival at Suedia.---The George Canning, the Columbine as escort, arrived in the harbor of Seleucia, off the village of Suedia, at the mouth of the Orontes on 3 April 1835.

It was learned on landing that Mehmet Ali, through Ibrahim Pasha, had withdrawn orders to assist the Expedition and had issued orders to the effect that Chesney was not to be given aid by local authorities. Accordingly, Lynch had discharged the camels which he had arranged to hire for the transport to Biricik. Chesney considered then, 1., returning to Malta until the British Government could take some action; 2., sailing around Africa to Basra for an ascent of the river; 3., landing all materials at Suedia to show "that the enterprise would not be given up."¹²

"The next day--," 4 April, "there was no time lost with Colonel Chesney--not a minute if it could be gained--preparations were made for landing the heavy weights and stores by affixing a hawser to the shore not far from the mouth of the Orontes, the transport to be effected by means of rafts hastily constructed for the purpose, and taken by hand to the shore."¹³

Chesney, it is seen, was possessed of indomitable spirit--obstinacy. His widow and daughter were to write of that side of his character: "Chesney had a plan of his own and he adhered to it with the same obstinacy which so

¹²Ibid., p. 173.

¹³William R. Ainsworth, The Euphrates Expedition (2 vols., London: Kegan Paul, 1888), I, 5. Of Chesney's use of the port of ancient Seleucia, (Suedia), Layard later wrote in opposition to the scheme of its use by the proposed Euphrates Valley Railway: "The Bay of Suedia is exposed to every wind except that which blows from off the shore, and affords no safe anchorage for shipping. Colonel Chesney was fortunate" See A.H. Layard, Autobiography and Letters (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 227.

often enabled him to overcome all obstacles, and sometimes, on the contrary, only brought disaster."¹⁴ (Italics mine).

Chesney also probably feared that such firm opposition on the part of Mehmet Ali might cause the British Government, if consulted, considering Ellenborough's earlier attitude, to cancel, or indefinitely postpone, the Expedition.

The work of unloading proceeded promptly on 6 April and a party was sent off to explore the Orontes in order to determine whether it might be possible to transport equipment by water to Antioch. Such exploration had not been carried out on his earlier visit to the Bay of Antioch by Chesney.¹⁵ The river was found, at that time, not usable for flat-boats.

Efforts of the opposition and counter-efforts.--Lynch arrived at Suedia on 8 April with word that orders had been issued to stop the landing and that the Mutsellim of Antioch was enroute to stop the proceeding. Chesney immediately determined to dispatch Escourt to Damascus to "demand" assistance in the landing and transported and proceeded to greet the Mutsellim with full honors but ignoring his orders to stop and getting him to delay any action until further word should arrive from Damascus.¹⁶

Estcourt's embassy.--Estcourt and his companion, Dr. Staunton had difficulty getting horses and an official escort for the trip to Damascus because of the fear of local authorities to give assistance of any kind to

¹⁵Supra, p. 50 . George Robinson, Chesney's old travelling companion, had visited Suedia and the mouth of the Orontes, later going upstream on horseback with John Barker, (then living in retirement at Suedia), only to determine that, due to a bar and swift current at the mouth and to a narrow pass upstream, the river was not navigable. Robinson, op. cit., pp. 346, 347.

¹⁶Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 175, 176. Ibrahim Pasha being absent in Cairo, Sherif Pasha of Damascus was in temporary authority.

the Expedition. Upon his final arrival at Damascus, it was found that Sherif was in Jerusalem, and, with the assistance of the Consul, Ferren, Estcourt proceeded, by way of Baalbek and the Cedars, to an audience with Ibrahim Pasha, then at Tripoli. Though he found there that Chesney had been there to see Ibrahim--without results--he did find Ibrahim more disposed to discuss the Expedition and its objects.¹⁷

Chesney and Ibrahim Pasha.--Of his own interview on 24 April with Ibrahim Pasha at Tripoli, whence he had gone characteristically, in pomp and with pomposity aboard the Columbine, Chesney wrote:

I did not fail to urge (what I presumed would have much weight) the heavy outlay now so uselessly incurred, and for which the British Government would consider him responsible. To this, however, and much more to the same effect, he made the general reply that he was only his father's lieutenant, and consequently without any power to act. Hoping that a little time might produce some change for the better, I told the Pacha that I should return to Suedia, and that if a more favorable reply did not follow me thither, I must make a statement to the British Government, in order that if the necessary steps to enforce assistance might be taken;¹⁸

Damn the torpedoes".--Captain Estcourt was dispatched on 8 May to appeal to the Vizir of Asia, Reshid Pasha, at Diarbekr, for all assistance in the area of Biricik, which was not in the domain of Mehmet Ali. It was about ten Kilometers below Birick that Lieutenant Lynch was to construct a temporary encampment named Port William, on the banks of the Euphrates. Chesney, in the meanwhile, all equipment and stores having been landed, cut his ties with possible retreat and discharged the George Canning and the Columbine.

¹⁷J.B.B. Estcourt, "A Journey from the Bay of the Orontes to Damascus (1835), " from his Journal. Reproduced in Chesney, Narrative . . ., as App. III, pp. 381, 406.

¹⁸Chesney, Narrative T . . ., pp. 179, 180.

Meanwhile.--The Expedition had been able to procure some camels for the transport of lighter stores and set about building wagons for heavier materials. Meanwhile, efforts were made toward improving the overland route to Birick.

Surveys of the Syrian coast continued from Tripoli to the Bay of Iskenderun under Lieutenant Murphy with Messrs. Ainsworth and Thompson.¹⁹ From the Bay of Antioch, Chesney had not given up the possibility of utilizing the Orontes and Fitzjames was successful--with thirty trackers--in floating the heavy keels of the steamers as far as Antioch, avoiding the steepest climbs of the overland route to the river. Chesney also had the steamer Tigris assembled and on 6 May she failed to negotiate the bar at the mouth of the river and was not powerful enough to go upstream against the current. His biographers wrote that he did this knowing the river was not navigable then and that he was just showing off.²⁰ Chesney and Ainsworth wrote that it was partly to avoid the "mischievous effects of idleness."²¹

Of activities at Amelia Depot, the camp at Suedia, and of Chesney himself, during the spring of 1835, Barker commented in his journals. Edward Barker wrote:

He was now to find that the opinion he had entertained of this distinguished officer was a just one, and to remark further, the qualities, activity, and perseverance which were characteristic. No difficulty (and

¹⁹Colonel Chesney and W. Ainsworth, "A General Statement of the Labours and Proceedings of the Expedition to the Euphrates," Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, (1837), VII, 414. This is the only account of the Expedition which was published by Chesney prior to the publication of Narrative . . ., thirty-one years after he left the Expedition. It was also the official account and was published as an appendix to Parliamentary Papers (1838), No. 540, after its publication by the Royal Geographical Society.

²⁰Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 292.

²¹Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 415.

he met with such at every step) could dishearten him, no opposition could baffle him. The more insuperable a matter appeared, the more he strove to overcome it; this is what is wanted in great undertakings and it is the want of it which causes them to fail. In the case before us, all that could be done was done. Colonel Chesney was seconded by good officers, who were animated by his spirit, who did all their duty, sometimes under very trying circumstances. They were treading unknown ground, and met with unexpected and unusual accidents.²²

Estcourt's second mission.--Estcourt's journey to appeal to Reshid Pasha was made, in Company of Dr. Staunton and Lieutenant Cockburn, by way of Aleppo, Biricik, and Urfa. At Urfa, he found Lieutenant Lynch attempting to hire camels for the transport to Biricik, in the hope that, if the camels were hired outside his own domain, Ibrahim Pasha would not molest them.

Two breaks.--Learning that Reshid Pasha was absent from Diarbekr on an expedition against the Kurds, Estcourt followed eastward to the Turkish camp. He was able to get from Reshid Pasha a not very specific order calling on all authorities and officers to assist the Expedition.²³

Mehmet and Ibrahim give in.--Estcourt returned to Amelia Depot on 23 June to find conditions very much better with the Expedition:

At last on the 3rd June, the bouyourldee [order] was received, and Ibraheem Pacha gave the permission and ordered Haji Halep Aga, the Mootsellim of Antioch, to go himself and assist in furthering the progress of the expedition by superintending the levelling of the road for the waggons, and the men and oxen for drawing them.

It is difficult to imagine how anything could be more distasteful to this proud, haughty, exclusive, fanatical Turk than this job, to stand in the hot sun of June for hours and wait upon the Ghiaours [foreigners]--a terrible fall from his dignity. Only those who know the rich Antioch-Turkish proprietors can sufficiently appreciate what he must have suffered! But it was as much as his head was worth to refuse, and go through with it he did. Ibraheem Pacha was not to be trifled with.²⁴

²²Barker, op. cit., II, 220, 221.

²³J.B.B. Estcourt, "A Journey from Suedia to Reshid Pacha's Camp near Diarbekr (1835)," from his Journal, reproduced in Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 407-438.

²⁴Barker, op. cit., II, 217, 218.

The transport.--The Expedition was now organized into five task forces: Lieutenant Murphy's survey party, Lieutenant Lynch's preparation of the camp and boat slips at Port William, and three transport forces.

Of the transport forces, Lieutenant Cleaveland, with Charlewood assisting, moved the equipment up the mountains to Guzel Burj, on the Lake of Antioch, a distance of only about forty kilometers but nevertheless, due to the climb, the most difficult part of the route to Birick. From Guzel Burj, Fitzjames took the transport by rafts and the flat boats across the lake to Murad Pasha, effecting a saving of about twenty kilometers' travel over the swamps surrounding the lake. Estcourt was in command of the last transport force, by far the greatest distance of the three stages, but over fairly easy terrain which took the animals and wagons south of Ain-Tab.²⁵

According to Chesney and Ainsworth, there were twenty-seven vehicles of all types constructed at Amelia Depot for the transport to the Euphrates. With the thirty-three wagons brought from England on the George Canning, then, there were sixty vehicles in all; this probably included rafts and flatboats. The animals used included 347 camels, 160 mules, and an undisclosed number of oxen for heavier loads and wagons. The large numbers of animals would probably have been reduced had not the Egyptians often forced the caravans to stop at the frontiers and bring other animals from Reshid Pasha's territory.²⁶

Ingenuity.--One of the lighter interludes which occurred during the move to Port William was described by Charlewood in his unpublished memoirs

²⁵Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 417.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 415, 417.

when he related a mishap on the first stage of the journey from Amelia Camp to Biricik:

We made an excellent forenoon's work until . . . the fore-truck of the foremost and largest boiler-waggon caught against the side of a rock, and in an instant the pole, already damaged, . . . was hopelessly smashed, and the boiler waggon in the rear could not possibly pass Already I noticed pleasure in the countenances of the men at the prospect of being allowed to return to their homes. In a downcast mood, I told them to sit down and eat their dinners, and then strolled to a small hovel or house a short way off (the only one within a range of some miles), to obtain some shelter from the burning heat of the sun. The family were squatting around their dish of pilau, to which I was invited. After going through the form of eating for the sake of politeness, I threw myself down on a mat, crestfallen and full of vexation. As I lay there, trying to hit upon some plan for overcoming the difficulty my eyes gradually rested upon something, which although not King Bruce's spider, urging me on to perseverance, was certainly quite as efficacious. I noticed that the roof of the hovel was supported from end to end by one large beam, double the size of my smashed pole I took care to proceed quietly, asking my host . . . if he would sell his house. He laughed at me I made my bargain By the time the Syrian waggons had finished their dinners, my English crew had fitted a new pole . . . and we had no more trouble with the waggon.²⁷

Chesney left Amelia Depot on 10 July and moved his headquarters to Port William. Amelia Depot was cleared and closed by the end of August and, before the middle of September, all supplies and equipment were as far as Murad Pasha. Some months were required for the completion of the passage from Murad Pasha because of adverse weather and the difficulty of securing adequate numbers of draft animals.

A growing casualty list.--The transport of the equipment of the enterprise was not without its toll on the band of adventurers. Mostly of typhoid and malaria, the malaria contracted in the humid swamps around Murad Pasha, seven men of the Expedition died before all was complete at Port William.²⁸ By mid-December, all the buildings at Port William with the

²⁷Admiral E.P. Charlewood, Passages from the Life of a Naval Officer (published privately), quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., pp.298, 299.

²⁸Ainsworth, op. cit., I, 65, 82. Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 418.

exception of the mess, had been turned into hospital wards and those who were not ill sought their own shelter.²⁹ Chesney himself became quite ill on several occasions.

On his assets.--Though the actual source was not mentioned by Chesney, good news was received in August 1835. Chesney had anticipated a rather easier time of the transport and that the Expedition would be in Basra by late spring, 1835. By the fall of that year, not yet fully marshalled on the banks of the river, the Expedition had utilized about all the total of 25,000 L. which had been allocated by the Government and the India Board. Apparently, Chesney had even gave into debt.³⁰ The good news was that in a letter of encouragement dated 7 May 1835, Sir Robert Gordon, then on the Board of Control, notified Chesney that an additional 5000 L. was available as advance payment against sale of the steamers.³¹

Dealing with the Arabs.--In preparation for the eventual descent itself, Chesney dispatched Lynch, Alexander Staunton, and Elliot who had, by that time, been employed as an interpreter, to treat with and assess the tribes on the banks of the Euphrates in Syria. They were joined by Lieutenant Robert Lynch of the Indian Army, who was visiting his brother at the time. Lynch and his party left Fort William on 1 September 1835 and were able, by bartering and with gifts, to make friendly contacts with most of the peoples on both banks of the river, though not without incident. He wrote of the people he visited: "The petty jealousies and broils which exist between these neighboring tribes considerably interrupted the advancement

²⁹ Ibid., I, 93.

³⁰ Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 200.

³¹ Parliamentary Papers (1838), No. 540, p. 7.

of our party;"32

Lynch described a meeting with an unnamed, raiding Egyptian general whom the party visited and with whom Lynch made peace for the people of Deir-ez-Zor. For the remainder of the journey in Mehmet Ali's Syria, the party was under the protection of the Egyptian.³³

At Aleppo, enroute back to Biricik, Lynch and his party were guests of Mr. Werry, the newly arrived British Consul. Also there as guests were Dr. John W. Helfer who was an Austrian naturalist and physician, and his wife. The Helfers were touring the East and Dr. Helfer hoped to set up a medical practice in Persia. The two accepted an invitation to travel as far as Port William with the members of the Expedition. It was not very difficult for the Helfers to be persuaded to join the Expedition, she as a botanist and he as naturalist, in exchange for their passage to Basra.³⁴

More troubles, then triumph.--At Port William, work had proceeded on the steamers and assembly of the Euphrates, the larger, was completed first. Chesney had thought to make the descent, first, in the Euphrates and then return and take both steamers down. In a letter to his father dated 11 September 1835, he wrote:

.....

I have been on the banks of the great river . . . since the 19th

³²Captain H.B. Lynch, "Report of a Tour from Bir to El-Deir (1836)," quoted in Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 435. Low, op. cit., II, 35.

³³Lynch, "Report . . .," in Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 437.

³⁴Countess Nostitz, op. cit., pp. 122-124. Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 205, 206. Dr. Helfer died when hit by a poisoned arrow off the Andaman Islands on 31 January 1840. His wife, according to Low, as befitted a niece of Field Marshal von Bulow, promptly killed the assassin with her pistol. Low, op. cit., II, 36.

of August [July] . The Euphrates is now almost ready to launch
I still hope to reach Basrah by the end of this month [Italics mine]
We are now occupied in placing depots of coals The Pasha gives
us considerable though unwilling support, and, by the commands of Russia,
he is still intriguing at Constantinople to get the Porte to stop the
expedition; but Ponsonby has proven too much for him as yet.³⁵
.

Apparently the lateness of the season, (the river being at its lowest),
the promise of replacement seamen for those who had died, and the coming of
the spring freshets in March made Chesney delay through the winter.

Toward the last of the transport, in addition to the customary
harassment by the Egyptians at the frontier, the Mutsellim of Biricik refused
to furnish draft animals for the transport from the frontier. That harassment
is best described in a letter dated 21 December 1835 from Estcourt to Richard
Wood, then a political agent of Ponsonby's in Syria, on the occasion of
Estcourt and Chesney's having tried to assist Wood and one of John Barker's
sons in getting out of prison at Rumkalah:

Colonel Chesney . . . is exceedingly glad to find that you made your
escape from Roum Kala when you return to Constantinople Colonel
Chesney hopes you will lend your assistance, when matters have to be
explained, since your personal knowledge of the Euphrates Expedition
may render clear that which might otherwise remain doubtful.

Our new Mutselmin professes great desire to be on a friendly footing:
but no [illegible] has yet been authorized by Reshid Pasha to the Mutse-
lims's report of the Expedition and the truth or otherwise of the
abominable falsehoods or which we were accused. I am inclined to think
he waits for instructions from the Porte. You will hardly believe that
we are accused of not paying people, of beating them and forcing them
to serve us and to give us arms against their will. Such were the absurd
accusations, which Reshid Pasha chose to believe and to send the new
Mutselmin with an order directing that no arms were to be allowed to
us and no assistance whatever: No one was to wash for us; and that
the head of anyone should answer for disobedience The state of
matters just now is total and entire absence of all assistance and . . .

³⁵Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 303. Though it was not required
of the Expedition, Chesney hoped to make a splash and bring the mails upstream
for dispatch to a waiting ship at Suedia. Correspondence with Sir John
Hobhouse will later elaborate on the failure of this scheme.

no one may supply us with provisions:³⁶

.....

Wood replied to Estcourt on 12 January 1836:

.....

The Porte may . . . have been induced to do this with the view of catering in part to the secret enemies of the Expedition By such means she (the Porte) cools the intrigues of the one party and at the same time allows the wishes of the other to be accomplished Your mentioning that the Pasha is waiting for orders from the Porte confirms me in my opinion. Had it been otherwise he would have had only to execute them. . . .

Ibrahim and his father feel we can constrain them to conform to our wishes while the interference of the Porte gives the question a different aspect as it brings it in contact with our policy toward that government and involves it politically. I know from an authentic source that Ibrahim Pasha is greatly averse to the Expedition and sees with jealousy I fear what he terms 'our getting a foothold in his dominions.' A great deal has been said to me respecting your guns and ammunition. . . . Ibrahim Pasha has been advised since he cannot prevent the Expedition to lend his assistance to it. He has also been advised on his permitting our Government to execute the works such as roads or canals which the success of the Expedition may render necessary hereafter, to offer to prosecute them himself so that they may belong to him. The Policy of such a conduct requires no comment."³⁷

.....

As a companion piece to the foregoing, it is worth recording here that Wood, in writing to Chesney on 24 April 1836 from Iskenderun, enclosed the following to Chesney from Ponsonby:

.....

I hope Colonel Chesney knows a Firman has been sent to Reshid Pasha to give all possible assistance to the Expedition. The Porte is favourable

³⁶Letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Richard Wood, 21 December 1835, in the Wood Papers, The Middle East Center, St. Anthony's College, Oxford. Ainsworth wrote that "Mr. Wood, formerly consul at Damascus, was, with a companion, . . . detained at this place [Rum Kalah] as spies." Ainsworth, *op. cit.*, I, 188.

³⁷Letter from Richard Wood to J.B.B. Estcourt, 12 January 1836, Wood Papers, *op. cit.*, Actually, a firman had been sent to Mehmet Ali on 24 December 1835 respecting treaties of commerce between the Porte and Great Britain and the obligations of Mehmet Ali in their execution in Egypt. See Great Britain, Foreign Office, State Papers, Turkey, XXIII, 1291, 1292.

to it--not hostile. It is Mehmet Ali, and his friends the Russians, who have endeavored to obstruct it.³⁸

.....

The opposition to the Expedition on the part of the new Mutsellim of Biricik was overcome by initial use of the mounts of the Expedition as draft animals in closing in all equipment to Port William. The new Mutsellim was himself replaced and some assistance was given, in the form of laborers, to the camp.

The situation having relaxed somewhat, Chesney, Ainsworth, Murphy, and Dr. Staunton left Port William in a search for coal in the Taurus on 9 January. They were absent from Port William until Chesney's return of 24 February. Other officers continued to survey the surrounding country and laid lines of levels as far upstream as Samsat, on the right bank of the Euphrates. A base line was laid for the survey of the Euphrates during the descent.

The last heavy load, the boiler of the Tigris, reached Port William on 27 February 1836. Final preparations were now made on both steamers and six men arrived as replacements from the sloop-of-war Columbine.³⁹

As a final encouragement, though word was not received concerning it for several months, more funds were in the offing. Sir John Hobhouse, who had succeeded Ellenborough as President of the India Board of Control,

³⁸Note from Lord Ponsonby to Colonel Chesney, n.d., forwarded in a letter from Richard Wood to Colonel Chesney, 24 April 1836, in Wood Papers, op. cit. Wood, in that letter, sought employment in the enterprise should the navigation be regularly established. Wood, however, continued to work for Ponsonby and, as late as 1840, was in use as a skilled agent in Syria. See Great Britain, Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of the Levant (2 vols.; London: T.R. Harrison, 1841), II, 19. Richard Wood's interesting career in the East may be followed in his brief and unpublished autobiography found in the Wood Papers, op. cit.

³⁹Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 220.

informed Chesney in a letter dated 1 March 1836 that the Board had appropriated an additional 5000 L. for the Expedition, in view of the delays thus far encountered.⁴⁰ This was the literal substance of Hobhouse's reply to Chesney's letter of 1 December 1835 from Biricik. Chesney had thrown the fate of the Expedition on the mercy of the imminent allocation of more money. In typical cavalier fashion, Chesney had written that if money were not forthcoming through official sources, he would "keep at it" and that he might be able, with the help of friends to raise 1500 L. to 2000 L. on his own.⁴¹

⁴⁰Parliamentary Papers (1838), No. 540, p. 8.

⁴¹India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 838, pp. 351-355.

CHAPTER VII

THE EUPHRATES EXPEDITION ON THE RIVER

On 16 March 1836, Colonel Chesney's birthday, the steamer Euphrates after thirteen months of hardship, on her majestic and maiden ten--kilimeter voyage from Port William to Biricik struck a sand bank, according to Chesney's biographers and Madame Helfer--a bad rapid, wrote the Commander--and the steamer refused to budge. Chesney wrote years later that "the engines failed to do their work."¹ Lightening the load, though to what extent it was not recorded, sufficed on the second trial the following day to move the Euphrates upstream, under the walls of Biricik. There was open ship for all of the town.

Plan for the descent and survey.--In order to conduct a proper survey and insure the safe descent of the Expedition, the work was planned to proceed initially as described by Chesney and Ainsworth:

A boat was despatched ahead, usually for a distance of 20 or 25 miles, sounding and taking bearings, which being placed on paper, when the officer returned, he became pilot to the vessel for the distance examined, and a second set of hearings with a double set of soundings were taken from the vessel's deck. Simultaneously with the water operations thus carried on by Lieutenant Cleaveland and Messrs. Eden, Charlewood, Fitzjames and Hector, there were two other sets on land, viz. a chain of ground, trigonometrical angles along the principal heights, based on astronomical points, by Lieutenant Murphy, R.E., and a smaller one, with a succession of short base lines from bend to bend, by Estcourt.²

Assignments of the staff.--It will later be seen what hand fate later

¹Chesney, Narrative . . . , p. 222.

²Journal of the Royal Géographical Society, VII, 423.

played by the following arbitrary assignment of officers and other principals of the Expedition:

Allotment of Officers and Men to the Euphrates and Tigris Steamers, the Commanding Officer being alternately in each steamer:--

<u>Euphrates</u>	<u>Tigris</u>
Capt. J.B. Estcourt, 43rd L. In	Lt. H.B. Lynch, Indian Navy
Litenant R.F. Cleaveland, R.N.	Mr. H. Eden, R.N.
Lieutenant H.F. Murphy, R.E.	Lieutenant R. Cockburn, R.A.
Mr. E.P. Charlewood, R.N.	Doctor Staunton, R.A.
Mr. J. Fizjames, R.N.	Mr. A. Staunton.
Mr. William Ainsworth	Mr. W.T. Thomson
Mr. C. Rassam	Mr. William Eliot
Seyd Ali <u>Interpreters</u>	J. Sader <u>Interpreters</u>
Mr. Thomas Hurst, <u>Engineer</u> .	Mr. Andrew Clegg, <u>Engineer</u> .
Dr. Helfer	Lieutenant R.B. Lynch, <u>Passengers</u> . ³
Mrs. Helfer. <u>Passengers</u>	Indian Army.
.....	

A beginning again.--Ainsworth, a surgeon, and geologist to the Expedition, who so admired and followed Chesney that he was known to others as Troisus, chose to say that he was away at the time of the ignominious maiden voyage of the Euphrates and that he returned from a journey the next evening. He did remark that "everything seemed uncomfortable" but muddled through by waxing romantic on the final departure of the Euphrates from Port William on 18 March 1836:

Before sunrise next morning the bugle roused us to the consciousness of an eventful day.

.....
The long delay caused by the difficulties of the transport, the arduous task of putting the boats together, the sickness and death that had befallen so many of the party, and the long travel that had intervened between our first landing on the coast of Syria and the day when, strong in the worth of our stout steamer, we felt ourselves positively afloat and off, seemed but a succession of trials, the goal of which was the river, and the reward success.

³Chesney, Narrative . . . , pp. 220, 221.

⁴Ainsworth, op. cit., I, 220.

The first great day of the descent, thus so gloriously introduced by Ainsworth, Chesney immortalized:

Our progress . . . was not propitious. After going on favorably for some hours the steamer ran aground, and that so firmly that it became necessary to lighten her to get her afloat. Before that could be accomplished a violent storm of thunder, lightning, and rain came on, and continued without intermission for nearly three days. It was not until March 22 that the descent was resumed . . .⁵

Running aground was a commonplace occurrence for both the Euphrates and the Tigris. From 9 until 17 April, the Euphrates was stuck fast on a pebble bank twenty-five miles upstream from Beles, which was near the present ferry site of Marbiite and was the ancient port for Aleppo. Word of the difficulty had reached Ponsonby, who wrote to Chesney that he "was extremely sorry to hear today that natural impediments have prevented you from proceeding lower than Beles."⁶ This, of course was during the season of the spring flood. Of these episodes, Dr. Helfer wrote in his diary on 3 April: "O blessed patience, how severely thou art tried! I will follow their (officers') example and in future write no more about being stuck fast, but only make three crosses at the most."⁷ And, on, 18 April, "Thank God, after being stuck fast for nine days we are afloat again."⁸

On 17 April, a flatboat containing fifteen tons of coal was lost with its cargo when her crew could not hold the current.⁹

⁵Chesney, Narrative . . . , pp. 226, 227.

⁶Note from Ponsonby to Chesney, op. cit.

⁷Dr. William A. Helfer's diary, quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 315. They also wrote that the "three crosses" appear pretty often.

⁸Countess Nostitz, op. cit., p. 214.

⁹Chesney and O'Donell, loc. cit.

The Expedition reached Beles on 19 April a month and 101 miles out of Port William. There Chesney chose to remain--to receive visitors from Aleppo, to take on supplies, to paint the steamers, and to establish friendly relations with the Shammar and Anizah tribes. It was at Beles that Chesney hoped to establish the major commercial port for the regular navigation of the river.

The lull before.--The steamer Tigris left Beles on 4 May, followed by the Euphrates on the sixth on the continuing descent. The river was deep, the steamers were running together, Tigris, which drew less water, leading. With an increase in speed, the survey became less detailed and much of it was done by Chesney himself from one of the steamers.

It was this stretch of river in Syria about which concern had been expressed concerning the possible attitudes of the people on the banks.¹⁰ The Expedition, however, encountered no particular difficulties; this was an area covered by Lynch on his pacification mission of September and October 1835.

Orders from Hobhouse.--About 14 May, a half day's journey upstream from Deir, Chesney received a letter from Sir John Hobhouse instructing him that, due to the large and unexpected expenditures of the Expedition he was to terminate the Expedition on 31 July. The steamers were to be handed over to the Commander of the Persian Gulf Squadron, Indian Navy. If he could

¹⁰George Long, reviewer, "Reports on the Navigation of the Euphrates--by Captain Chesney, R.A.," Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London (1833), III, 233. Long wrote: "A little above and below Giabar, Captain Chesney states that the Arabs have a bad character, which it seems they were in Rauwolf's time They were unacquainted with firearms but no doubt they are possessed of them now, and may be found a little more dangerous visitors to the voyager than they were two centuries and a half ago."

complete the journey and terminate on time, he was to be allowed to ascend the river.¹¹

Concerning the instructions thus received, Chesney determined to say nothing to his subordinates, but to increase the exertions of the enterprise to secure the support of the country and the Government. He replied to Hobhouse to that effect and continued downstream.

Other concerns.--The Expedition had begun to develop other than those of lack of friends and the river bed. "Colonel Chesney had taken up his quarters permanently on board the Tigris, induced to do so by the hope of putting an end to a state of disunion which had unfortunately sprung up in that vessel."¹²

Of the aforementioned disunion, Chesney later was required, after inquiry, to write to Hobhouse:

With regard to the unhappy misunderstanding in the Tigris; it is the only thing up to this moment which has ever been kept in the background

The dispute arose about reading aloud after dinner between Lieutenant Lynch of the Indian Army and Dr. Staunton and Mr. Cockburn. Lieutenant Lynch ultimately took the part of his brother, although only a passenger, and he placed the other two gentlemen in arrest, in which state they remained 18 days until I released them on the grounds that the proceeding itself was illegal because charges were writ of which they did not receive the copies required by the Articles of War.

This step was followed by an order calling for mutual apologies, beginning with Lynch and making known my alternative to suspend all from duty, and leave them at Aleppo pending the orders of Government.¹³

Concessions were agreed to, according to Chesney, by all except Lieutenant H.B. Lynch, who thought he should be supported. Lynch finally

¹¹Letter from Sir John Hobhouse to Chesney, 31 March 1836, in Parliamentary Papers (1838), No. 540, pp. 8, 9.

¹²Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 324.

¹³Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 26 October 1836. In India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837, p. 235.

acceded and Chesney was "more inclined to blame the general system flourishing in India" and deplored the "numerous and disgraceful courts martial" in India.¹⁴

Of Lynch, Charlewood had written during the move from Suedia to Port William that "our senior acting-lieutenant who was everlastingly growling, was always sure to suffer more than anyone."¹⁵

Chesney was also, about this time, in trouble with Hobhouse about not forwarding his accounts and reports to London in a timely manner.

The Storm.--The situation already being tense, then, aboard both steamers, and with the pressure of the imminent and inglorious break-up of the Expedition weighing on Chesney, the descent continued from Deir-ez-Zor on 18 May and into the area of present-day Iraq. On the twenty-first of May, the navigation going well, the Expedition left Salahiyya, four hours above Anah. In the early afternoon, disaster struck. It is better described by Chesney to Hobhouse:

.....

It is with feelings of deepest regret that I do myself the honor of informing you that the 'Tigris' steamer was totally lost during a hurricane of indescribable violence, which, after the short struggle of about eight minutes, sent a fine vessel to the bottom in five fathoms water, and deprived His Majesty of fifteen valuable men, with five natives in addition.

.....

All was continued prosperity up to the afternoon of the 21st instant, when it pleased God to send the calamitous event, of which it is my duty to give a feeble sketch.

A little after 1 P.M. on that melancholy day, the flat boats being a little ahead, and the 'Tigris' heading the 'Euphrates', a storm appeared bringing with it, high up in the air, clouds of sand We made the signal for the 'Euphrates' to choose a berth and make fast

The 'Tigris' was immediately directed toward the bank, . . . with so much violence as to recoil. . . leaving two men on the bank who had jumped out to make fast: . . the wind . . rendered it impossible to secure the vessel . . her head falling off into the stream She was

¹⁴Loc. cit.

¹⁵Charlewood, quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 307.

then nearly broadside to the wind, with the engines almost powerless, and the waves forcing their way in at the windows.

. . . Lieutenant Lynch came to report that the 'Tigris' was sinking A momentary gleam of light faintly showed the bank, . . .

Lynch encouraged the people to remain steady until they reached land.

. . . The vessel went down all at once Lynch, who was at my elbow, dived out . . . and I had the good fortune to get clear in the same manner. . . which brought me to the land.

. . . For an instant I saw the keel of the 'Tigris' uppermost . . . her paddle-beams, floats, and parts of the sides were already broken up, . . . so speedy and terrific had been the work of destruction.

From the moment of striking the bank until the 'Tigris' went down, it scarcely exceeded eight minutes, whilst the operation of sinking itself did not consume more than three minutes;

I had little or rather no hope that the 'Euphrates' could have escaped; but the intrepid skill of Lieutenant Cleaveland and Mr. Charlewood enabled them to get out two anchors in the very nick of time and by the united means of two hawsers, and the engines working at full speed, the vessel maintained her position at the bank until the storm abated

.
. . . All our efforts have as yet failed to find the remains of the vessel If she should be found without having been dashed to pieces, I shall take measures to recover her

I am happy to say that the survivors of the Expedition remain as much unshaken as ever in their confidence regarding the final success of the undertaking, as well as the manifest advantages, facilities, and cheapness of this line of communication

We are therefore continuing our descent and survey to Basrah; hoping not only to bring up the mail . . . but also, . . . to demonstrate the speed, economy, and commercial advantages of the River Euphrates provided the decision of Ministers shall be, in the true spirit of Englishmen, to give it a fair trial, rather than abandon the original purpose in consequence of an unforeseen and, as it proved, an unavoidable calamity.¹⁶

.
Other accounts bear out the tragedy as related by Chesney to Hobhouse.¹⁷

Among those lost in the storm were Lieutenant Robert Lynch and Lieutenant Cockburn. Chesney wrote from Anah on 27 May: "We are going down in the remaining vessel but the expedition is to be broken up which will be the best answer

¹⁶Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 28 May 1836, quoted in Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 262-268.

¹⁷See Ainsworth, op. cit., I, 390-398; letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Colonel Chesney, reproduced in Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 268-270. Chesney and Ainsworth's account of 1837 bears only a brief paragraph concerning the loss.

to your letter from Scanderoon."¹⁸ However, the records show that, of the Englishmen, only H. B. Lynch, Mr. Eden, and W. Taylor Thomson, all officers, were released at Anah.¹⁹ The six men and NCO's remaining of the original crew of the Tigris, then, must have joined the Euphrates.

The Calm.--The Expedition remained at Anah from 25 through 30 May, collecting what it could of the cargo and equipment of the Tigris. Chesney had not located the steamer and left Alexander Hector with a diving bell at Anah to continue the search and possible recovery. All was again tranquil as the survey continued on 31 May until, sixty-seven miles downstream, the Commander realized he had left Ainsworth exploring the sights of ancient Rawah and Anah; a day's delay at Haditha and Ainsworth showed up on foot, after having been robbed of all but his clothes.²⁰

The river being then at its highest stage, there was no interference to the descent from the dangerous stone weirs--suoors--which feed the current to drive the ancient water wheels between Haditha and Hit.

From Fallujah, a small party headed by Estcourt proceeded to Baghdad in order to connect the survey of the river with Baghdad and to restore funds exhausted in the expenses of the Tigris tragedy.²¹

At Hillah from 6 to 11 June, the Expedition was rejoined by the aforementioned Baghdad party, which was accompanied there by Dr. Ross, surgeon at the Baghdad Residency. Ross was able to warn the Expedition of the imminent attack of a group of Hillah townspeople who, according to Chesney, had been

¹⁸Letter from Colonel Chesney to Richard Wood, 27 May 1836, Wood Papers, op. cit.

¹⁹Parliamentary Papers (1837), No. 540, pp. 66, 67.

²⁰Ainsworth, op. cit., I, 420-430. An amusing account.

²¹This journey is described by Ainsworth, op. cit., II, 4-12.

stirred to anger by a disgruntled native pilot for the Expedition. Chesney was particularly suspicious and fearful of Shi'ite Moslems. His ignorance and lack of understanding of local cultures was devastatingly publicised by Layard.²² However, Estcourt and Rassam were able to secure for the enterprise a safe passage from the officials of Hillah and the Expedition steamed to Diwaniyya, thence to Lanlum, at which they arrived on the thirteenth of June²³

"The navigation of the river through the marshes of Lemlum was attended with some difficulty to a large steamer; the bed is very narrow, the windings are numerous and abrupt, and the banks low."²⁴ The Expedition had taken the wrong channel and on 17 June was finally able to steam free of the marshes.

Combat.--At Al Khidr, where the steamer stopped for fuel the Expedition saw combat with the tribe of Beni Hakim:

"Shortly after our exit from the Lemlum an unfortunate collision took place with some Arabs of the Beni Hayakim tribe, originating in violence offered to men employed in cutting wood. After several attempts at a parley and reconciliation, and enduring for some time their irregular musquetry, the commander of the expedition felt himself forced to retaliate,

²²Austen H. Layard, "Communication with India," Quarterly Review, (1857) CII, 367. Layard quoted Chesney on Islam in ridiculing his knowledge of the East: "The sword of Mohammed was not to be successfully resisted, and the new doctrines were received in the divided forms now known as Sunnie and Shiah. After a protracted contest the former sect (that of the Arabs) was established in the eastern provinces and the latter in Persia Proper. The Sunnie belief is that there is one immortal God, whose works are without beginning or end and that he will be visible to the souls of the blessed; whilst the Shiah deny the immortality of the soul, and maintain that the co-existent principles of Zoroaster will for ever contend for the mastery." See F.R. Chesney, The Expedition to the Tigris and Euphrates (2 vols., London: Longmans, Green, 1850), I, 85. See also Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 286.

²³Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 284, 285.

²⁴Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 428. For a description of this marsh country and the present branches of the Euphrates, see John D. Yarbrough and Robert P. Perry, "Initial Report, Euphrates Navigation Project," Paper for Professor Zeine N. Zeine, American University of Beirut, 1964, (mimeographed).

which retaliation, although carried to a very slight extent [striking a blow for Empire with grape shot from a nine-pounder], entailed the loss of some lives among a people yet too confident in their own resources."²⁵.

The Shatt al Arab.---Considering the fortunes of the Euphrates Expedition and the Turkish fleet at Qurna, it was no small wonder that the two did not sink as they exchanged salutes on 18 June 1836. Chesney anchored off Basra on the nineteenth. There he found no mail, provisions, instructions, or materials for repair of the Euphrates prior to attempting the ascent. He wrote to Hobhouse on 19 June:

.....

We are now about to prepare for an ascent with the Indian mails on the 9th of the coming month. Depots of coal are already place, and, altogether the task will be light one, compared to what we have just effected.²⁶

.....

The "Walloping Window Blind."---Finding no repair materials at Basra, working against what he thought was still a 31 July deadline, rather than trust an officer of the Expedition with a boat of country to go for materials, "although the Euphrates was not by her construction adapted for the sea, . . . Chesney determined upon crossing the head of the Persian Gulf to Abu-shehr [Bushire], and there obtain his refitting: this was accordingly done. . . ."27
The Euphrates Expedition put to sea on 21 June 1836.

Charlewood described the trip to Bushire as miserable: "All went well until we were out of sight of land, and then it was all guess-work how we were to steer, the compasses being useless, not having been corrected for the attraction of the iron hull."²⁸ (Italics mine).

²⁵Ibid., p. 429.

²⁶India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837, letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 19 June 1836.

²⁷Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 429.

²⁸Charlewood, quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 337.

At Bushire, repair materials were furnished by the Resident, Captain Hennell, who had been Chesney's host during the illness of 1831.

What to do ?--From Bushire, Chesney wrote to Sir Robert Grant, President of the Bombay Government, on 30 June that, though he had received instructions to break up the Expedition on 31 July, he assumed the Bombay Government would want the ascent accomplished and that he was preparing to ascend the river on 9 July. The same general message went to Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, on the same day, 30 June.²⁹ Chesney did not know that a letter from Hobhouse to Chesney dated 1 June 1836 had extended the life of the Expedition to 31 January if it were his intent to ascend the river.³⁰

When word reached London of the Tigris disaster and of Chesney's determination to continue, his efforts were lauded by the India Board. Plans were laid to have ships waiting, at Chesney's word, off the coast of Syria for either one or two ascents.³¹ Of all these arrangements, Chesney was unaware in July at Bushire.

Auckland's reaction to what must have been a real tale of woe in Chesney's letter of 30 June was one in full support of the ascent:

.....

We received from Colonel Chesney only two days ago, an account of his misfortunes and of his partial success, and have authorized Sir Robert Grant to give him all reasonable assistance, We do not know what orders Colonel Chesney may have received from you, nor what impediments the advance of the dry season may throw in his way;

²⁹Letters from Colonel Chesney to Sir Robert Grant and Lord Auckland, 30 June 1836, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837.

³⁰Parliamentary Papers (1837), No. 540, p. 9.

³¹Chesney, Narrative, pp. 272, 273.

With means at our disposal I would gladly try the more doubtful and difficult part of the experiment. In the event of Colonel Chesney's determining not to attempt the re-ascent of the Euphrates, I shall look to his steamer for the Indus.³²

.....

Chesney began to vacillate about moving upstream on his own authority. He wrote to Grant on 7 July that if the mails were not received shortly after 9 July he would wait at Bushire for orders from India and the Home Government.³³

As repairs to the steamer progressed, Chesney made one trip to Kuwait to deliver a desert mail for Aleppo. Estcourt and Murphy were at Basra working on the survey, and Ainsworth was on a tour of the province of Fars as far up as Persepolis. Chesney wrote to Hobhouse from Kuwait on 24 July that he was so encouraged that he was going to make the ascent whether the mail came or not. He had been encouraged by hearing that the Tigris had been found.³⁴

On his return to Bushire, Chesney found the clipper Sir Edward Compton arriving from India with supplies for the Expedition and with word that two ships, the Shannon and the Hugh Lindsay, would be arriving with mails for conveyance by way of the Euphrates.

Back to sea.--After securing replacement for several of the men who had quit the Expedition at Bushire, the Euphrates departed Bushire on 25 August in the tow of the Indian Navy ship Elphinstone. Chesney had determined to pick up Estcourt and Murphy, and, while awaiting the mails, navigate

³²Letter from Lord Auckland to Sir John Hobhouse, 31 August 1836, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837.

³³Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir Robert Grant, 7 July 1836, ibid.

³⁴Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 24 July 1836, ibid.

the Karun.

Of the resignations at Bushire and of the reluctance of the crew and officers to make the return open-sea voyage to the river, Charlewood wrote:

In vain did officers and men refuse to cross the Gulf a second time in the Euphrates, in vain did the former protest that it would be impossible for the vessel, even were she safely arrived at the other side, to make her way through the Lamlum marshes and deliver the mails. . . . Chesney merely answered that he would oblige no one to accompany him who was unwilling to do so, but that he himself must and would carry out the undertaking. Eventually he compounded matters with the officers by getting the Elphinstone to tow them across.³⁵

Of general conditions within the organization at about this time, Estcourt wrote to his commander from Basra:

If curiosity had any part in inducing them to join us, that has been gratified; nor is there anything tempting to the taste of a sailor in the navigation of the Euphrates. But most of all, I suspect, the hard work under severe heat was that which frightened them.

From your letters, I should infer some other cause for your feeling less satisfied When you left Basrah, I think you could have had no reason to be disappointed in your officers. I never saw exertion spared Your anxiety and impatience to get forward left them, though stiving, in the lurch; but when such was the case it created no small pain to them to find themselves unable to keep up.³⁶

On 1 September, the Euphrates was free of the Elphinstone to go upstream. A much-needed morale booster had been that, in a calm while in the open Gulf, the boilers of the Euphrates were fired and the steamer towed the Elphinstone.

It was learned at Mohammarah (Khoramshahr) that Lieutenant Murphy had died at Basra and the Expedition hastened to Basra.

The not-so-navigable Karun.--Returning to Mohammarah, the Euphrates

³⁵Charlewood, quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 337. Chesney wrote to Grant that he accepted a tow because the engineer was ill.

³⁶Letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Colonel Chesney, n. d., quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 339.

entered the Karun on 6 September. That is, up the Hafar Canal, past the mouth of the Bamishir. Having gone some seventy miles up the Karun in a day, the Expedition returned to Mohammarah on the seventh by way of the Bamishir.³⁷ The schooner Shannon was waiting with mails from Bombay.

An ascent.--By this time, the Euphrates, having been in rather difficult waters, was no longer in condition to go upstream without further repairs. These effected, she steamed up to Basra on 13 September, having lost by death the only remaining engineer, whom Chesney promptly replaced with a talented Artilleryman.

Chesney decided, the Hugh Lindsay--which he anticipated would carry a larger, more important mail--not having arrived, that he would ascend the Tigris and send the Shannon mail overland from Baghdad. He would then descend to Qurna and take the Hugh Lindsay's mails up the Euphrates. Chesney himself expressed strong doubts about making a successful ascent in the low water of the fall.³⁸ His own reasons expressed above were not those given Hobhouse in a letter dated 27 September. He wrote that he ascended the Tigris rather than the Euphrates because he heard that Mehmet Ali was at Aleppo and was marching on Baghdad. He thought, therefore, that the mail might reach Constantinople and that the vessel might be safer on the Tigris.³⁹

The Expedition left Qurna on 15 September and arrived Baghdad on the thirtieth, having run hard aground three hours south of the city in a typical demonstration.

Fuel shortages and running aground stretched the return voyage to

³⁷Ainsworth, op. cit., II, 172, 173.

³⁸Chesney, Narrative . . ., p. 303.

³⁹Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 27 September 1836, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837.

Qurna from 5 to 16 October, when it was discovered that the Hugh Lindsay had been waiting at Qurna for thirteen days.

Instructions at last.--The Captain of the Hugh Lindsay carried orders for the Expedition to ascend the Euphrates with the mails and then to continue exploring the Tigris and the Karun. If these activities were not practicable, Chesney had the alternative of taking the steamer to the Indus.⁴⁰ He had also, by this time, been informed that Parliament had appropriated an additional 2000 L. for the six months' extension of the Expedition to 31 January, 1837.

While preparing at Qurna to make the ascent of the Euphrates, the Expedition had to deal with the Sheikh of the Muntafik who had become hostile over two points. They had attached the Hugh Lindsay because she had on board Mr. W. Samuel, a missionary who had been distributing religious tracts and attempting to convert members of the tribe. The second point was that the Sheikh refused to let the Euphrates go upstream because he had heard that this signalled a full-scale British invasion. Chesney did say that the Expedition seemed less objectionable to the tribe than Mr. Samuel.⁴¹

Concerning the tribe's objection to the Expedition, Chesney suspected the French Consul at Basra, V. Fontanier, but not the French Government:

.....

For the rest, I do not suspect Mr. Fontanier of having done anything on the part of his Government but rather that his former residence in Russia may have made him a well-wisher; and he would, I dare say, be glad, could he succeed in spreading such reports as would create alarm, and discontinue the work which has been so very prosperous.⁴²

.....

⁴⁰Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 18 October 1836, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837.

⁴¹Confidential letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir Robert Grant, 27 October 1836, ibid.

⁴²loc. cit.

From Qurna, the Euphrates moved up to Suq as Shuyukh on 20 October 1836. On 22 October, having secured a pilot and guide to take the Expedition safely past its former enemies at Al Khidhr, the party again entered the Lamlum marshes. By the twenty-eighth, one of the engines was out and the Expedition still had not made it through the marshes.

Of one day's progress in the Lamlum marshes, Fitzjames wrote, vividly: "We worked, tracked, anchored, weighed, grounded, backed, hove, yelled, and screeched at times, till 12.30, when we anchored to dine, and the vessel had advanced two miles."⁴³

There was nothing for Chesney to do now but retreat. He dispatched Fitzjames, who volunteered to carry the mails overland, with two passengers who had joined from the Hugh Lindsay.⁴⁴

Return to Basra.--Like Scarlett O'Hara, to Chesney, tomorrow was another day and on the day the one-engine descent from Lamlum began, 30 October, Chesney wrote to Hobhouse that he planned to keep the Expedition together looking for the Tigris, except for the Indian Navy people. He intended to tie the Euphrates up at the Residency at Basra. Either he or Estcourt would go to India on the Hugh Lindsay.⁴⁵

⁴³James Fitzjames, diary, quoted in Chesney and O'Donell, op. cit., p. 350.

⁴⁴Fitzjames, with the two passengers, Alexander and Stewart, left the Euphrates on 30 October 1836. They were held prisoner in Lamlum until 8 November and released. The mails were not tampered with, nor were Fitzjames's belongings. He sold his clothes and paid for boat passage to Diwaniyya, arriving at Baghdad on 20 November. Though he had been instructed to proceed by way of Aleppo to Iskenderun, (Chesney still expected a steamer to be waiting), Taylor sent him to Beirut, which he reached, with the mails intact, on 26 December. See his letter to Sir John Hobhouse, 14 January 1837, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837.

⁴⁵Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 30 October 1836, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837. Hector had given up raising the Tigris and proceeded to Baghdad.

Upon arrival at Basra, on 8 November, Chesney determined that he would go to Bombay himself. From his letter to Hobhouse of that day, Chesney seemed fairly convinced that the Expedition would be broken up he wanted instructions, and he expressed among other things, a new and profound interest in taking the steamer to the Indus.⁴⁶

Chesney's departure; Estcourt's command.--On the ninth of November, Chesney addressed instructions to Estcourt, whom he left in command of the Expedition, stating that he intended to return before 31 January 1837, the date set for the deactivation of the Euphrates Expedition. He left no orders as to what was to be accomplished once repairs to the steamer were completed. Rather, he gave Estcourt a list of activities which he would pursue were he to remain:

A "good examination" of the rivers Karun and Tigris, the Karun first, to include the area of Susania.

Exploration of the Tigris route to Lake Van by the Expedition prior to 31 January or, thereafter, by Ainsworth alone, assisted by Rassam.

Supervision of Corporal W. Greenhill, Royal Artillery, who had been assistant to Murphy on the surveys and was then employed near Baghdad, striking a line of levels for a proposed canal between the Tigris and the Euphrates.

Funds were to be provided Estcourt for the prosecution of his tasks by either Hennell at Bushire or Colonel Taylor at Baghdad.

Finally, Chesney wrote: ". . . As soon as you shall have completed the examination of the Tigris, it will, I believe be fulfilling the wishes of Government, if I have not arrived before, by your proceeding to break up

⁴⁶Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 9 November 1836. Hobhouse had given up on the Expedition, having sent two ships to Syria to receive the mails by way of the Euphrates. He assumed Chesney had not succeeded. He repeated the order to break up on 31 January 1837 and instructed Chesney to turn the steamer over to the Indian Navy and to return to England, "though you will have accomplished only one-half your project." See his letter to Chesney in the same reference, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837, 28 October 1836.

the expedition, merely leaving Mr. Ainsworth to continue the geological examinations for coal,"

Estcourt was, in the absence of Chesney at the close of the Expedition, to leave the steamer at Baghdad.

Chesney closed his instructions to Estcourt by writing that "there can be little doubt that the navigation of the Euphrates will be resumed and firmly as well as successfully established."⁴⁷

Colonel Chesney left the Euphrates and the Expedition for Bombay aboard the Hugh Lindsay on 14 November 1836, his leaving, according to Chesney, an "absolute sacrifice I make personally by quitting an enterprise which occupies all my thoughts time and wishes."⁴⁸ He left, even after the trials of the Lamlum marshes, still firm in his own mind that the Euphrates River was "one of the most navigable in the world" and, ever the imperialist, ever the Russophobe, firm in the belief that the defense of India required the British presence on the river; further, that without the British presence, an army, "with ease and speed . . . might be transplanted on rafts to the Persian Gulf . . ." from "Malatia to Bussorah" and "arrive without fatigue."⁴⁹

To Ahvaz,--On the day of Chesney's departure for Bombay, the Expedition steamed to Mohammarah and prepared for the ascent of the Karun. Major

⁴⁷Letter from Colonel Chesney to Major Estcourt, 9 November 1836, *ibid.* With reference to Corporal Greenhill's survey for a canal, Taylor had written the India Board that Ali Riza Pasha wanted the Expedition to clear the ancient canals connecting Baghdad and the two rivers. See, in the same India Office file, letter from Colonel Taylor to Sir John Hobhouse, 9 July 1836.

⁴⁸Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 8 November, *op. cit.*

⁴⁹Letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 16 July 1836, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837. And the Army would perish in the gorges of the Taurus.

Estcourt, with Ainsworth, Charlewood, and Rassam made an excursion, by small boat, up the Hafar Canal and explored tributaries of the Karun while the steamer Euphrates, under command of Lieutenant Cleaveland moved upstream to Ahvaz, where the steamer was rejoined by the other group. In spite of Chesney's earlier assurances that the Karun was navigable and that the ledge of rock and the artificial bund at Ahvaz would be no impediment, the bund did stop the Euphrates.⁵⁰

From Ahvaz, the same smaller party, in a local small boat continued up the Karun to its junction with the Diz River. There was some small trouble with unfriendly people on the banks and the party returned to Ahvaz after three days.⁵¹

Baghdad.--Putting its own charts to use, the Expedition returned to Mohammarah and attempted to pass through the Bamashir to the Gulf. More exploration of the Bamashir was done by small boat, and Estcourt took the steamer to Basrah and prepared to go up the Shatt al Arab and the Tigris to Baghdad.

Christmas, 1836, was spent by the Expedition at Kut al Amara and the party anchored at Baghdad on 26 December. Two weeks had been spent on the voyage upstream, during which additional bearings were made for the survey. Hector, after having given up his efforts to raise the Tigris, was waiting at Baghdad for the Expedition.⁵²

⁵⁰Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 434, 435. See also letter from Captain Chesney to Sir Stratford Canning, 4 May 1832, reproduced in Chesney, Reports . . ., p. 66.

⁵¹Ainsworth describes the ascent of the small party and its return to Ahvaz. See Ainsworth, op. cit., II, 221-224.

⁵²The Tigris was never raised. Parts of her hull were located in 1879.

On 2 January 1837, the steamer Euphrates headed upstream from Baghdad only to be stopped next day by a faulty rudder which was damaged during a windstorm. This called for an immediate, crippled, return to Baghdad.⁵³

A too-late reprieve.--At Baghdad, Estcourt encountered two additional problems: the water was too low for an immediate second attempt to ascend the Tigris, and there were disciplinary problems with the Indian Navy crew replacements. Estcourt, in accordance with his instructions from Chesney, set about making arrangements for the dissolution of the Expedition. He discharged the Indian Navy personnel and made arrangements for the overland transport of the remainder of the party. Hector was left in charge of the vessel and Ainsworth and Rassam prepared to continue the exploration on the Tigris route to Asia Minor.

During final preparations for departure, Estcourt received orders from Bombay to continue the survey. Left without a complete crew, however, and having committed remaining funds to the return of the personnel of the Expedition, Estcourt chose to carry on with his previous instructions and plans.⁵⁴

The remaining members of the Expedition left Baghdad by caravan for Damascus on 23 January 1837.

Chesney in India.--Chesney arrived at Bombay on 1 December 1836. There he proposed that the Red Sea and Euphrates lines should be opened for

⁵³Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, VII, 436. See also, letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Sir John Hobhouse, 6 January 1837, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 837.

⁵⁴Letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Sir John Hobhouse, 21 January 1837, ibid. The instructions to continue the survey came from the Marine Department of the Bombay Government.

for monthly communications, "experimentally, for eighteen months." He suggested the use of two small steamers. That proposal was rejected but the Bombay Government did take steps to instruct Estcourt to continue the survey of the Tigris and Euphrates. And, as Chesney has suggested, a regular overland mail by way of Baghdad and Damascus to the Syrian coast was instituted. Lord Auckland sent Chesney a message that that route was not to be opened after all, and, further, that plans for steam on the Indus were cancelled.⁵⁵

Chesney was prepared to return to the Expedition when he received a letter from Estcourt announcing the circumstances of the break-up of the Expedition.⁵⁶ There was then nothing for Chesney to do but return to England, which he did by way of Basra and then by Damascus to Beirut. He arrived in England in early August, 1837. Estcourt, with the remainder of the party, had preceded him by several months.

Meanwhile.--It had been anticipated that some sort of steam activity would be kept alive in Turkish Arabia if only for purpose of exercising rights under the firman of 1834. Chesney replied favorably on 14 December 1836 to an inquiry from the India Board concerning the qualifications of H.B. Lynch, of whom more later, to command the extended Expedition.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Chesney, Narrative . . ., pp. 327-332. Actually, the overland dromedary mail was opened and remained open for several years. The extension of the Expedition which was ordered by the Bombay Marine was only temporary pending a decision by the Central Government. Final instructions were that Alexander Hector was to remain in charge of the steamer to "ply up and down the river Tigris occasionally." See letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Sir John Hobhouse, 3 April 1837, and letter from Colonel to Hobhouse, 5 May 1837, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 838.

⁵⁶Ibid., Vol. 837, letter from J.B.B. Estcourt to Colonel Chesney, 21 January 1837.

⁵⁷Ibid., Vol. 837, letter from Colonel Chesney to Sir John Hobhouse, 14 December 1836.

As Chesney and the larger party made their separate ways to England, plans for future use of the Tigris and Euphrates and the Turkish Arabian overland routes were discussed in exchanges among Grant and Auckland in India and Hobhouse in England. The British Government had fixed the Egyptian route as official and anything done in Turkish Arabia was to be the business of the Indian Government and the Board of Control. Hobhouse rejected Chesney's plan of using two small steamers on the Euphrates only as too expensive and preferred the use of the overland route for mails from Damascus to Baghdad and the steamer Euphrates to Mohammarah. The Euphrates Expedition was not considered a failure in England. The Tigris and Euphrates were considered as alternate routes for smaller steamers and overland communication by the British Government and continued interest in and activity on the river and the desert route will be the subject of the following chapters.⁵⁸

The wrap-up.---In England, Chesney busied himself with, first, the final administrative accounts of the Expedition, the completion of maps and charts, the placement and promotion of his officers, and the setting down of the story of the Euphrates Expedition. He was posted to China as a Brigadier in 1843, and his manuscripts were lost, delaying for years even the publication of preliminary works. In addition to the careers of Estcourt and Lynch, which have been covered earlier, others of the Expedition turned out to do quite well. Charlewood became an Admiral, Fitzjames and Cleaveland Captains in the Royal Navy, and W. Taylor Thomson a diplomat.

Chesney, upon his return from China, was to again become active in

⁵⁸For full background see letters from Sir John Hobhouse to Sir Robert Grant, 23 and 28 February, 1837, and Hobhouse to Lord Auckland, 28 February, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence Vol. 837.

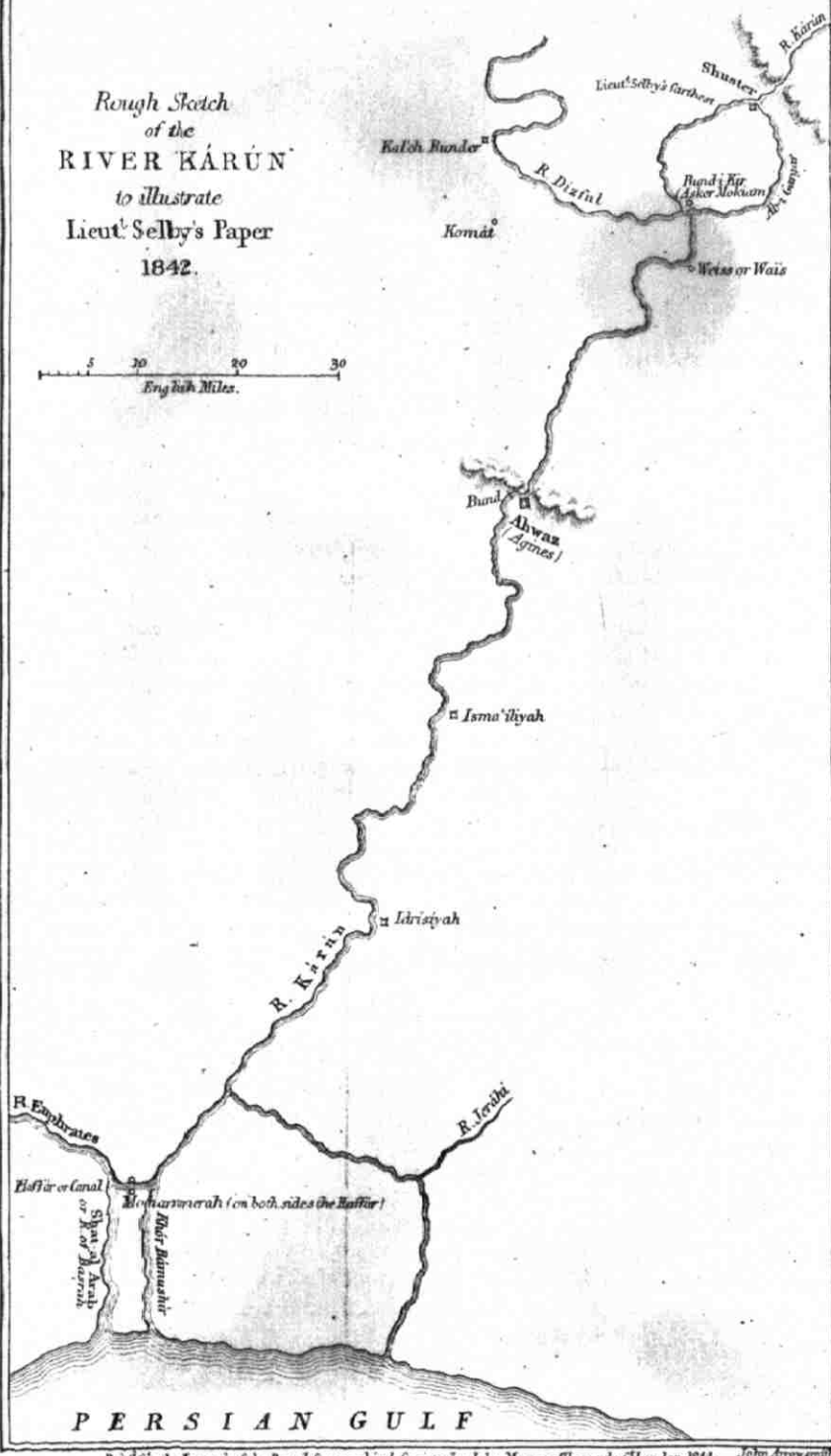
the affairs of the area of the Euphrates and the dream which occupied the greater part of his long life.

PART III

BRITAIN KEEPS HER HAND IN

Rough Sketch
of the
RIVER KĀRŪN
to illustrate
Lieut. Selby's Paper
1842.

5 10 20 30
Eng. Stat. Miles.



Pub. for the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, by John Murray, Albemarle St. London 1844. John Brown Smith

CHAPTER VIII

THE EUPHRATES EXPEDITION RECONSTITUTED

A new commander.--In view of the fact that Lord Auckland had determined, for the moment, not to prosecute his plan for extensive steam communication on the Indus, the steamer Euphrates remained idle at Baghdad under the care of Alexander Hector. It was decided by the India Board and the Bombay Government to continue to exercise the British navigation rights on the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers by having the steamer ply between Baghdad, Basra and Mohammarah with the mails and to continue, as feasible, exploration and survey of those streams. Accordingly, Henry Blosse Lynch, having been recommended, however grudgingly, by Chesney, was appointed by Sir John Hobhouse to take command of the steamer; he was also to take charge, for the Bombay Government, of the revived Dromedary Post between Baghdad, Damascus, and the Gulf.

The Dromedary Post.--Ferren, in his position as Consul at Damascus, had been directed to establish a scheduled fast mail between Damascus and Baghdad and Damascus and Beirut. On 16 December 1836, in a letter to the Secret Committee of the India Board, he reported the arrangements. He had purchased dromedaries and established relay stations. Each relay was carried by two couriers and they travelled light and fast.¹ The average trip between

¹India Office Records, Secret Letters from Bombay, Vol. 13, letter from J.W. Ferren to the Secret Committee, 16 December 1836. It hardly follows from the date and content of Ferren's letter that Chesney could have had much influence on the re-establishment of a desert mail.

Baghdad and Damascus was to take twelve to thirteen days; the route to or from Beirut was another day.

Colonel Taylor, as Agent at Baghdad, acted for the Bombay Government. Hector was to conduct the mails, twice a month, to Basra or Mohammarah in the steamer Euphrates for which an engineer was to be dispatched.² Taylor, in February 1837, advised the Government to hold to the right to navigate the Euphrates and the Tigris. His information was that "many enemies" were seeking to break up the Expedition. He advised that the steamer should navigate the Tigris in April and the Euphrates at a favorable, high water period. Ibrahim Pasha was said to be in the vicinity of Anah and to be claiming the west bank of the Euphrates his to the Gulf.

Lynch takes command.---Lynch arrived at Baghdad by way of Damascus in August and reported that the steamer was in "high order".³ His crew arrived in October and Lynch released Hector to Taylor for the establishment of a mail post at Mohammarah.⁴ Lynch made plans to continue the river surveys.

Ascents by the steamer Euphrates.---After a winter spent with the new crew plying several times with the mails to and from Baghdad and an ascent above that city to Kut Abdullah, the Expedition tacked the Euphrates in the spring of 1838. An interesting account of the ascent to a point upstream from Hit was left by J.W. Winchester, who was surgeon on the steamer Euphrates, captained by J.C. Hawkins, Indian Navy. Lynch was aboard as Expedition commander.

Winchester described an encounter with old acquaintances of the

²Ibid., letter from Colonel Taylor to the Secret Committee, 26 February 1837.

³India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Series, Vol. 841, letter from Lieutenant Lynch to Sir John Hobhouse, 17 August 1837.

⁴Ibid., letter from Lynch to Hobhouse, 15 October 1837.

Expedition on the first day of the ascent:

In the vicinity of one of those villages, a few miles above Kurnah, the Arabs of . . . the Montefique tribe, then at war with the Pasha of Baghdad, had an outpost, and by means of a boat and several large bundles of dried reeds and date leaves supported strong chains across the river to prevent the Turkish admiral Bel Mos passing up his fleet, which consisted of four brigs at Shoog Shookh. As the steamer approached this blockade several hundred Arabs were observed on both banks, but their chief, Shaik Paris, assured us that they had no hostile intentions towards the English, on the contrary that as soon as the wind became such as to prevent the fleet, at anchor two miles lower down, standing up the river, they would slacken the chains and enable the steamer to pass; the wind fortunately in the course of the night changed, and the Euphrates passed upwards.⁵

Winchester remarked that the Euphrates "manipulated" the Lamlum Marshes on 22 May 1838 "with comparative ease." Upstream, relations with the Dulaim Arabs were friendly and the steamer passed on up to Hit and beyond.

Lynch was encouraged enough to write to Hobhouse from Hit on 31 May that he would propose a line of merchant steamer to the merchants of Aleppo, Basrah and Baghdad. He proposed scheduled service, Baghdad to Basra, monthly and asked for the support of the Home and Indian Governments. He wrote that Ponsonby was in favor of his proposal and that the Turks liked the idea of a regular communication. Lynch also requested a promotion for himself to the rank of commander.⁶

The passage denied.--Lynch was overly optimistic at Hit and premature in his proposals. On the day of his letter to Hobhouse, the steamer departed Hit to continue upstream; of that day's voyage, Winchester was to write:

Five miles above Hit, two of these gateways narrowing the stream between dead walls for water wheels increased its force so as to prevent

⁵J.W. Winchester, "Memoir on the River Euphrates, . . . during the Late Expedition of the H.C. Armed Steamer, Euphrates, in Proceedings of the Bombay Geographical Society, November 1838, pp. 2-5.

⁶Letter from H.B. Lynch to Sir John Hobhouse, 31 May 1838, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 841.

the steamer passing upwards, even though the vessel was lightened several inches and her engines were in the highest possible order.

This barrier . . . giving to the current a force of seven miles an hour, and causing it to assume a line of elevation above where the dead wall is, from which the steamer uniformly turned back.⁷

On its return to Baghdad, the steamer Euphrates passed through the Sughlawiyya canal, from north of Fallujah to Baghdad. With the steamer running aground often, the transit of something over eighty kilometers required four days.

Lynch was to write later of the venture: "The power of the current. . . prevented the steamer from ascending higher. And my knowledge of the river leading me to believe that the vessel could not pass the obstacles in the low season, the navigation was for the time suspended."⁸

The mails.--For the next year, the Expedition was mainly occupied on the Tigris, carrying the mails and dispatches between Basrah and Baghdad. Of Lynch's proposals for merchant steamers and scheduled river service, and even the failure to ascend the Euphrates, the India Board was not particularly interested. In his letters to Lynch of 29 August and 24 October 1838, Hobhouse had been more concerned that the Expedition should "keep alive our flag" in Turkish Arabia and that the mail service should become more efficient; he wrote that unless something were done to improve service, "all England and India will be up in arms against our negligence," and that the mail was "of a great deal more importance than the politics of Turkish Arabia."⁹

⁷Proceedings of the Bombay Geographical Society, November 1838, pp. 10, 11. Winchester remarked that Chesney had said Alexander mistook the subaqueous walls of the sugoor as a means of defense against his Legions coming downstream.

⁸Letter from H.B. Lynch to Lord Fitzgerald, 25 June 1842, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 844.

⁹Letters from Sir John Hobhouse to Lieutenant Lynch, 19 August and 24 October 1838, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence,

Reinforcements.--In 1839, primarily due to the activities of Mehmet Ali in Syria, The East India Company had built three new iron steamers, smaller than the Euphrates, and had them shipped in sections around the Cape to Basra. The steamers were assembled at Basra under Lynch's supervision in the winter and spring, 1839-40.¹⁰

Lynch reported the establishment of the flotilla on 15 June 1840.¹¹ The river fleet then consisted of the three new steamers, the Assyria, Lieutenant Charles D. Campbell commanding; the Nitocris, Lieutenant James Felix Jones; the Nimrod, Lieutenant Grounds; and the old Euphrates, Lieutenant Michael W. Lynch.¹² Layard, who was a guest at the Residency in Baghdad in 1841, described the officers as "enterprising and intelligent" and Jones as the "most distinguished." They were all Indian Navy officers and "spoke, most of them, Arabic, Persian, and Hindustani."¹³ The new steamers were described by Low as being armed with nine-pounder pivot guns.

Operations.--The flotilla operated initially with two boats based at Basra and two at Baghdad. Lynch continued his surveys of the Tigris and reached as far upstream as a point twenty miles below Mosul. Ainsworth, who was travelling with Rassam at the time, wrote that Lynch was "very low"

Vol. 841. Lynch reported on July 1838 that the dromedaries, on one occasion, had run away with the mails.

¹⁰The formation of the new flotilla is discussed in Low, op. cit., II, 45. See also letter from F. R. Chesney to Colonel Jackson, Secretary of The Royal Geographical Society of London, 2 April 1842, in Correspondence Files of The Royal Geographical Society.

¹¹Letter from H.B. Lynch to the Superintendent, the Indian Navy, 15 June 1840. In India Office Records, Bombay Secret Proceedings, Vol. 150.

¹²Low, loc. cit. Michael Lynch was the third of the Lynch brothers in Turkish Arabia.

¹³Layard, Autobiography . . ., I, 329, 330. Layard mentioned also that H.B. Lynch had married one of Taylor's daughters. Another daughter was married to H.C. Rawlinson, Taylor's immediate successor at Baghdad.

about the failure of the attempted ascent of the Euphrates in 1838 and,
further:

. . . complains bitterly of the Government not fitting out new boats. The Euphrates and Nimrod are at Baghdad and the Nitocris and Assyria at Basra. He has 86 men and I cannot understand why he does not try the ascent in one boat. It appears that the old Euphrates is the best of the lot as on the Indus none can stem the current without high pressure engines.¹⁴

Health problems.--"Great sickness prevailed" among members of the Expedition in 1840.¹⁵ H.B. Lynch went to England on sick leave in July after having evacuated Hector from Basra to England in May.¹⁶ Taylor wrote of the conditions of Lynch and of "sick crews." The India Board requested Taylor to establish a hospital for the Expedition in Baghdad in December.¹⁷

¹⁴Letter from William Ainsworth to Captain Washington at The Royal Geographical Society of London, 11 July 1840, in Correspondence Files of The Royal Geographical Society.

¹⁵Low, loc. cit.

¹⁶See letters from H.B. Lynch to the Secretary, the Board of control, 4 May and 20 July 1840. Puryear remarks that in 1840, one of Britain's projects in Turkey was the establishment of a military post road from Samsun to the Persian Gulf, for "economic exploitation of the Turkish mines and other resources," and that H.B. Lynch surveyed the road in 1840, submitted his report to the British Government, and that it became Board of Trade Report, 1840, No. 10,258. See Puryear, op. cit. pp. 117, 118. A search at both the Indian Office Library and the Public Record Office in 1965 failed to turn up that document. It is probable, considering the short period between activation of the new flotilla at Basra in June and Lynch's departure in July, that the report was incidental to Lynch's journey to England. It is also possible that Lynch surveyed for a road south from Diarbekr; Rashid Pasha had used, for several years, a road which ran, by way of Sivas, from Samsun to Diarbekr. That activity is described by Puryear as an outgrowth of the commercial treaty signed by Turkey and by Ponsonby for England in 1838. I would prefer to think that, though the mines were known, conditions being what they were in the Ottoman Empire and in Persia in 1840, there were more immediate concerns.

¹⁷Correspondence concerning health conditions among the crews may be followed in letters to and from the Board of Control, 25 July, 15 July, 20 July, 26 November, and 3 December 1840, in Bombay Secret Proceedings, Vol. 150. Michael Lynch died in January 1841 at Diarbekr enroute to England, his health "having broken down, owing to the effects of hard work while assisting his brother on his survey of the upper waters of the Tigris." See Low, op. cit., II, 45.

An acting commander.---From July through October 1840, the Expedition continued running the mails until confirmation was received from the India Board of H.B. Lynch's designation of Lieutenant C.D. Campbell as acting commander.¹⁸ Campbell made plans to make his own attempt at an ascent of the Euphrates.

Another attack at the ascent.---In January 1841, Campbell took a party overland from Baghdad to Hillah and Anah in order to explore the river at its lowest state. On 1 April, with Jones and Grounds commanding the Nitocris and the Nimrod, he departed Basra on the ascent of the Euphrates.

.....

Lieutenant Campbell ascended to the same spot where the Euphrates stopped in 1838. When it was found that the force of the current was too great to allow of further ascent by steam, Lieutenant Campbell not being acquainted with the river in its lower state had the vessels tracked up the difficult passages by manual labor from the banks, but the operation took up so much time that on reaching a point some little way below Beles having provisioned his vessels, the river had fallen so much as to prevent his return.¹⁹

Low wrote that the Nitocris and the Nimrod remained upstream as "a diversion against Ibrahim Pasha in Eastern Syria, and in other respects exercised considerable influence during the war with Mehmet Ali."²⁰

On 20 August 1841, Lynch, recovered in health and promoted to the rank of Commander, returned from England and rejoined the Expedition at Beles.²¹ He continued, in writing to Lord Fitzgerald: "On my return to the Euphrates

¹⁸Letter from the Board of Control to C.D. Campbell, 12 September 1840, in *Bombay Secret Proceedings*, Vol. 150.

¹⁹Letter from Lynch to Lord Fitzgerald, 25 June 1842, *op. cit.*

²⁰Low, *op. cit.*, II, 47. Maybe. But Lynch was to remark that Ibrahim Pasha's supporters continued looting and pillaging on the west bank and merely ignored the steamers. Jones did make contact with the British fleet at Beirut for supplies.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 48.

from England I thought it my duty to turn the position of the vessels then at Beles to good account and began a survey of the river in the low season."²²

Another sinking.--Making a slow ascent while waiting for high water, the Expedition suffered a second, less drastic, sinking downstream from Raqqa on 20 February 1842. Lynch wrote to the Secret Committee:

I have the honor to inform you the Nimrod Steam Vessel descending the Euphrates struck a sunken tree or 'snag' which went through her bottom under the starboard bilge just before the Engine Room. Lieut. Grounds, her Commander, immediately ran the vessel on shore, and I am happy to state she is now safe.

.
We had the unspeakable mortification to see the Nimrod's bows sink deeper and deeper into the quicksand. . . . the water tight bulkhead . . . well shored and secured.²³

The Nimrod having been raised and repaired, the survey continued downstream, Lynch returning in April overland to Baghdad from Anah, Jones and Grounds took the steamers on down to the Shatt-al-Arab.

Finding.--Of the navigability of the Euphrates, Lynch wrote to Lord Fitzgerald:

I regret very much that the result of the experiment on the Euphrates, and a careful survey of that river, between Hit and Beles, obliges me to report to your Honourable Board [Fitzgerald had succeeded Sir John Hobhouse] that it is not well adapted to the purposes of Steam Navigation. I have therefore in accordance with the spirit of your Honourable Board's instructions withdrawn the vessels from the Euphrates taking care to maintain all our acquired rights to the navigation of that river by Steam Vessels.²⁴

Selby on the Karun, a side-show.--Lieutenant W.B. Selby, Indian Navy, joined the Expedition at Baghdad in January 1841.²⁵ He was left in command on the Tigris and the Shatt al Arab when Campbell and his party ascended the Euphrates in 1841. Selby apparently fell under the spell of Layard, though

²²Lynch to Lord Fitzgerald, 25 June 1842, op. cit.

²³Letter from Commander Lynch to the Secret Committee, 20 February 1842, in India Office Records, Secret Letters, Various, Vol. 13.

²⁴Letter from Lynch to Lord Fitzgerald, 25 June 1842, op. cit.

²⁵Low, op. cit., II, 48.

his own accounts do not mention Layard by name, and determined to navigate the Karun to Shuster, against the wishes of Hennell, still resident at Bushire.²⁶ After having passed by the River Hai from the Tigris to the Euphrates, Selby, with Layard and Doctor Ross aboard the Assyria passed down and up the Bamashir and then ascended the Karun to the bund at Ahvaz. By means of a tow line, Selby had the Assyria tracked up the bund, from which the steamer continued upstream nearly to Shuster by way of the Karun and the Ab-i-Gargar Canal.²⁷ The steamer was grounded for some time in the Karun on the ascent--according to Layard, because of Selby's obstinacy.²⁸ A helpful populace at Shuster freed the steamer--thanks, according to Selby, to "the high character a late English traveller bears among them."²⁹

Selby's temper.--The Assyria remained in the Ahvaz area from March until June 1841. Enroute up the Tigris to Baghdad in June, Selby lost his temper over a supposedly stolen dog, foolishly fired into a crowd of Arabs, and was shot in the head for his trouble. After a partial recovery, Selby was evacuated to England by Ross.³⁰

Commerce on the Karun.--Layard was interested at the time in opening commerce along the Karun and had forwarded reports of his observations to Constantinople. He had had some dealings with Alexander Hector, by 1841

²⁶Sir Henry Layard, Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia (2 vols; London: John Murray, 1887), II, 365, 366. Layard wrote that Selby, in his published account of the journey, "forgot to mention the fact that I had accompanied him, and that the expedition was undertaken at my suggestion,"

²⁷Lieutenant W.B. Selby, I.N., "Account of the Ascent of the Karun and Disful Rivers and the Ab-i-Gargar Canal, to Shuster," in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London (1844), XIV, 219-246.

²⁸Layard, Early Adventures . . ., II, 347, 348.

²⁹Journal of the Royal Geographical Society, XIV, 240.

³⁰Layard, Early Adventures . . ., II, 365, and Low, op. cit., II, 48.

recovered and returned to Baghdad where he was in business as a merchant.³¹ It seems, then, that Layard's motives in encouraging the ascent were not only to show off to his friends in Khuzistan, but to promote a commercial venture--he was, at the time, penniless.

The Expedition abandoned.--Lynch had received orders from the India Board, while yet upstream on the Euphrates, that after the descent all steamers were to remain in the lower Euphrates. Mehmet Ali being no longer a threat to Turkish Arabia, and the overland route by way of the Isthmus of Suez being secured, it was determined to abandon the Expedition. Lynch, who had been joined by his brother, George, as Surgeon, and Stephen, in a private family business in Baghdad, protested his own transfer vigorously. He wrote to Peacock at the India Board:

You will not have heard and may be surprised to hear that Lord Ellenborough [then Governor General of India] has finally broken up this Flotilla and ordered the vessels with the exception of one under the charge of Lieutenant Jones sent to India. I am also ordered to India and nothing will remain here of all our work save one steamer in a doubtful and precarious position.

.....
I however hope I may still be employed in this country and I shall feel very satisfied if you will . . . recommend . . . that I may be employed here or at least somewhere the troubles I have taken in acquiring the languages of Asia may not be trown away.
.....

³¹Layard, Early Adventures . . ., II, 339, 340. There is some rather humorous, nails-bared, name-calling correspondence concerning the elimination of Hector's post as Agent for the Post Station and Depot at Basra during his absence on sick leave. Taylor was unhappy, to begin with over Lynch's running the mails, a job which had provided some income to the Resident; Chesney's interceding in Hector's behalf to secure for him the post at Basra; and Hector's reluctance to return to the Post Station at Basra as ordered by Lynch. Hector's unhappiness led to one of his merchant friends in Sheffield threatening Taylor, in a letter to Doctor Ross (Ross did not know the gentleman, to "molest your ancient solitary reign and Government." Hector, according to Taylor, wanted to abolish the Residency and have himself appointed Consul for the Home Government, a post which Taylor was after. See letters pertaining to this dated 20 April, 11 May, and 14 June 1841, in India Office Records, Home Miscellaneous Correspondence, Vol. 843.

The Dromedary Post is also ordered to be broken up. This is much to be regretted. I had organized a capital establishment . . . and all the Desert Arabs . . . now will go over in a large body to the French who have been effectually endeavoring to establish a post between this and the Mediterranean.³²

.....

In March 1843, Lynch was still trying for his post in Baghdad as Taylor, himself soon to be replaced as Resident by H.C. Rawlinson, wrote to the Secret Committee that the Pasha of Baghdad had requested an armed steamer from the Indian Government, the steamer to be commanded by Lynch.

Disposition.--At the end of June 1842, Campbell took the Euphrates, the Assyria, and the Nimrod to Bushire for shipment to India. He proceeded with the crews to India, and James Felix Jones remained with the Nitocris at Baghdad, "to protect British interests . . . and continue the survey of the country between the two great rivers." He bore the rather grand title, "Surveyor of Mesopotamia."³³

Achievements of the Expedition.--Low adequately sums up most of the achievements of the Euphrates Expedition on the rivers:

1. The initial descent from Biricik to Basra.
2. Ascent of the Karun to Ahvaz, under Estcourt.
3. Ascent of the Tigris to twenty miles upstream from Baghdad.
4. Ascent of the Tigris to Kut Abdullah by Lynch.
5. Passage of the Sughlawiyya Canal by Lynch.
6. An ascent of the Hud River by Campbell.
7. Campbell's ascent of the Euphrates to Beles.
8. Selby's passage of the Hie.
9. Ascent of the Karun and Ab-i-Gargar to Shuster by Selby.
10. Passage of the Bamishir, Mohammarah to the Gulf by Selby.
11. Campbell's descent of the Euphrates.³⁴

³²Letter from H.B. Lynch to Thomas Peacock, 27 October 1842, in Bombay Secret Proceedings, Vol. 150.

³³Low, op. cit., II, 49.

³⁴Loc. cit.

CHAPTER IX

CONTINUED ACTIVITIES

The Surveyor of Mesopotamia.--Lieutenant James Felix Jones, Indian Navy, late officer with the Euphrates Expedition, was destined to remain in Turkish Arabia and Persia, plying the rivers and the Gulf, charting and mapping and otherwise ploddingly tending to the business of Government off and on for more than twenty years. After his initial appointment, commanding the steamer Nitocris upon the final disbanding of the Euphrates Expedition, he largely confined his activities to the Tigris and to the Baghdad area in particular. In 1843 and again in 1846, he attempted ascents of the Tigris, trying to establish steamer service to Mosul. Operations were, however, on a day-to-day basis as it remained necessary to establish fuel depots or to tie up to the banks and cut wood for each day's operations.¹ He assisted the Turco-Persian Border Commission in 1843 and in 1850;² Loftus wrote of the monthly service provided by Commander Jones and the Nitoris when the Commission was in session at Mohammarah in 1850.³

Old dreams of Empire.--In all his years of residence in Turkish Arabia,

¹Captain James Felix Jones, "Memoirs of Captain James Felix Jones, I.N.," in Selections from the Records of the Bombay Government, ed. R. Hughes Thomas (Bombay: 1892), XLIII, 3-30.

²Ibid., pp. 136, 137.

³William K. Loftus, Travels and Researches in Chaldea and Susiana (London: James Nisbet, 1855), pp. 279-280.

Jones built up little hope for the industry of the Turks or the Arabs of the area. In writing of an 1848 overland survey of the Nahrwan Canal, he said:

The day is not far distant, indeed, in which I expect to see European capitalists and emigrants turning their attention to these rich plains, so as to fertilise them by the aid of machinery. By the purchase of an estate in the secure district contiguous to the capital and the outlay of a modest sum, success would be sure, particularly if the principal devoted his time to an active superintendence.⁴

In discussing local and ambitious projects of the type he envisioned, Jones wrote: "Turkish projects and Turkish energy go not, however, hand in hand." Further, in promoting his plan of European activity, "the great bone to the public weal, I mean the Arab, should be driven to his deserts, or thoroughly subjugated, as a first step."⁵

Surveys continued.--At the request of Stratford Canning, by then Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, Jones reported to Constantinople in 1853 on the state of the Tigris and Euphrates. He wrote, in part:

.....

The Euphrates has entirely lost its character as a navigable river for many years past, owing to the embankments which formerly controlled the spring floods in the lower part, between Sukesh Sheukh and Korneh, having been swept away about ten years back; indeed, its capabilities for navigation at any time have never been great, though, I am aware, the general opinion, founded upon the reports of the Euphrates Expedition in 1836, are in favor of it as a feasible route to India. It must be born in mind, however, that Colonel Chesney's vessels navigated the stream during the period of its highest rise, and in a year, too, when the flood attained some feet beyond its ordinary level; consequently, no obstacles were met with in the descent of the stream to lead to the inference that

⁴Bombay Selections, op. cit., XLIII, 131. Richard Coke wrote that the Nahrwan Canal was dug after the death of Hulagu and is "apparently the ancestor of the main western stream of the river." See Richard Coke, Baghdad: the City of Peace (London: Butterworth, 1927), p. 155. The main stream is now west of Hilla and flows past Hindiyya and Kufa.

⁵Bombay Selections, op. cit., XLIII, 133.

any existed. The contrary, however, the case; impediments to navigation even in the season of its greatest height, caused by shallows, ancient mill-dams, and rocky ridges, which traverse its bed from Hit: . . to the latitude of Aleppo. The rapids coursing over these during the freshes from April to June could only be surmounted in 1841 by the steam vessel I commanded, with the aid of two hundred men attached to tow ropes acting in concert with the steam power; . . . the delays that would ensue from the maneuvering requisite . . . would neutralize the advantages derivable from the agency of steam.

.
. . . the river has left its bed at Al Hammar south of Sukesh Sheukh, and is entirely lost in the marshes To the anarchy existing in this tribe [Muntafik] during the last six years, the change in this fine stream, is, indeed attributable; for the repair of the dams has been neglected in the wars which during this period, the rivalry of parties has maintained for the Sheikship; It must, therefore remain closed to shipping, until, in the course of time, it opens for itself a new channel.

The Tigris, however, is eminently navigable from the sea to Baghdad at all seasons of the year⁶

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Census of Baghdad.--In 1855, Jones submitted a map and census of Baghdad, the map being complete to the names of owners of principal buildings. The study contained economic information including imports, procurable supplies, prices, wages, etc. Jones completed his career in Turkish Arabia and the Gulf area as Political Agent at Bushire, 1854-1862.

Messrs. Lynch.--It has been noted elsewhere in this study that Alexander Hector, of the original Euphrates Expedition, had gone into business in Baghdad as a merchant in 1841. In that same year, Stephen and Thomas K. Lynch,

⁶Ibid., 363-365. Layard wrote of an incident concerning maintenance of the banks by the Muntafiks. "It is related of one of their former chiefs that, having succeeded very young to his office, some of the dependent tribes sought to throw off his authority. Amongst other acts of insubordination, they refused to perform the duty assigned to them of keeping up the river banks. The chief himself marched against them to enforce obedience. Having summoned one of their sheikhs to his tent pitched on the Tigris, he asked why the usual measures had not been taken to maintain the embankments. An insolent answer, reflecting on his youth, having been returned, he ordered his followers to commence the works at once, and to use the sheikh as the first pile. He was seized and driven, after the fashion of a stake, head-foremost into the mud!" See Quarterly Review, op. cit., CII, 369.

encouraged by their brother H.B., had formed the firm of Lynch Brothers at Baghdad. H.F.B. Lynch wrote in 1905:

The firm of Lynch was founded in 1841, and they conducted trade upon the Tigris and Euphrates by means of large vessels built of teak, which were imported into the country from the Coast of Malabar. They carried from 80 to 120 tons of merchandise apiece, and were tracked by 15 to 20 trackers escorted by a like number of guards. They flew the British flag and were registered as British vessels. Another firm, that of Messrs. Hector and Co., owned similar vessels. These formed themselves up into a small fleet when proceeding up and down river, for the purpose of mutual protection. They were from time to time subjected to fines and exactions on the part of the Arabs; but the Turkish Government, who were kept duly informed, did all in their power, through the intermediary of Colonel Taylor, to prevent these impositions. The firm of Lynch, having opened a house in London, organised a direct service of fast sailing clippers between Great Britain and Busreh."⁷

Lynch Brothers operated on the original firman which had been issued by the Porte in 1834 for the Euphrates Expedition. However, as the firm expanded, it became necessary to seek a new firman and the British Government interceded in 1860 to secure one for the renamed Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company. The family firm at that time had as its Chairman, Henry Blossie Lynch, by then retired as a Captain and active in the business.⁸

Railroading.--In 1856, there was formed another spectacular--and strange--enterprise for communication to India by the Euphrates Route. The enterprise, which never materialized, was strange--and only of interest here--because it entailed navigation of the Euphrates and involved Chesney, H.B. Lynch, and Ainsworth! The proposal of the Euphrates Valley Railway Company was, from the port of Suedia, Chesney's old port of debarkation, to run a railway, passing within a mile of Aleppo, to Ja'ber Castle, south of present-day Maskin. From there, passengers and cargo would be taken to Basra in

⁷"The Story of the Euphrates Company", in The Near East and India, 24 November 1932, p. 9.

⁸loc. cit.

lightweight steamers or towed flatboats for further sea transport to India. Eventually, the railroad would have run to Baghdad and Basra, once the traffic had proven itself.⁹

Chairman of the Railway Company was William P. Andrew, who had built railroads in India and was Chairman of the Scinde Railway. Chesney was Consulting Engineer and H.B. Lynch was on the Board of Directors; Stephen Lynch and Company were the Agents in Baghdad. Ainsworth, though he assisted in promoting the railway project, was saved to be an officer in a side enterprise of the same group. The situation in the East being what it had been in the Crimean War, coupled with continued British Government opposition to a Suez Canal, was enough to oversubscribe the shares of the Company which was capitalized at 1,000,000 L. in 20-L. shares.

Chesney's final survey.--In 1856, Chesney and Sir John MacNeill went to Turkey in order to promote the interests of the Company in securing the necessary firman and Turkish Government financing for the railroad. Chesney and MacNeill journeyed to Suedia and considered and selected a desirable route from the mouth of the Orontes to Ja'ber Castle. Back at Constantinople, the Turkish Government was willing to grant the firman and invest the money on a guaranteed six per-cent per year return, the guarantee to be made by the British Government.

In 1857, the matter of the Government's guarantee came before the House of Commons before the impact of the Sepoy mutiny could have its shocking effect on the Government. The outlook for establishment of the venture and for further adventures among the rocks of the Euphrates was brilliant in

⁹"Prospectus" of the Euphrates Valley Railway Company, in William P. Andrew, The Euphrates Valley Route to India (London: W. H. Allen, 1857), pp. 175-177.

the initial stages of the debate. However, Palmerston squelched the project for years when he rose to speak on 14 August. The Government approved, he said, of the venture, which would bring increased commercial and political intercourse with India and which would serve as an alternate route with the Isthmus Railway. The Government, however, should be spectators and "we cannot hold out slightest encouragement that we should be disposed, either directly or indirectly, to advance any money for the attainment of that end."¹⁰

The business, then, failed to carry the Government; without the British Government's guarantee of the interest and the original investment, the Turkish Government would not participate or grant the necessary firman. The railway, then, was another unfulfilled dream for Chesney--but still he dreamed of the Euphrates Route.

The European and Indian Junction Telegraph.--Though proposals had been submitted to the British Government as early as 1845 for telegraph communications to India, no active measures had been taken until abortive attempt of Lionel Grisborne, in 1855 to lay a submarine line from Constantinople to Alexandria, linking that with European land lines.¹¹ In 1856, William P. Andrew, of railway fame, applied for financial guarantees from the Indian Government for the Euphrates and Indian Junction Telegraph Company, the lines of which would parallel the routes of the Euphrates Valley Railway and its steamer route down the Euphrates. The Board of Directors included Andrew, Ainsworth, and Chesney.¹² This scheme, however, died with the first defeat

¹⁰Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (1857), CXLVII, 1676, 1677. Palmerston used the same debate to declare the Government's continued opposition to a Suez Canal. It would, said he, infer the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, "no injury of England but of Turkey," for the preservation of which Europe had so recently taken up arms.

¹¹F.J. Goldsmid, Telegraph and Travel (London: 1874), p. 61.

¹²Ibid., p. 62.

of the Euphrates Valley Railway. In 1858, the submarine cable of the Newall brothers up the Red Sea from India, which had been backed by the British Government, failed as the result of a combination of poor material and poorly laid cable.¹³

"Political, apart from commercial, necessity rendered it imperative that the governments in England and India should be brought within the shortest possible period of communication with one another" and the British Government began actively to seek telegraph, ties across Persia, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor. The laying of the cables and stringing of the wires through Persia and Turkish Arabia to open the first telegraph relay system from Europe to Kurachi--opened to the public in 1865--is told in detail elsewhere.¹³ It was felt, especially after the Indian Mutiny, that in this era of the telegraph the countries could never be allowed to be separated by thirty days of postal service when by the agency of the wires but a few hours need divide them.¹⁴ The story can be as dramatic as that of the Euphrates Expedition and involved a group of men, most of them military, every bit as obstinate and persevering as that hardy group.

Later efforts.--The Euphrates Valley Railway, with Chesney, now a retired full General, still in the thick of things, was briefly revived as an alternate route to the Suez Canal in 1872--under the pretext that a rupture with France would close the route to India. It was primarily and finally defeated by the existence of established lines through Asia Minor. Until the establishment of the Baghdad Railway after World War I, there

¹³Edward B. Bright, (Dr. Lardner), The Electric Telegraph (London: James Walton, 1867), pp. 97, 98.

¹⁴Loc. cit.

were several schemes of putting railways across Arabia and Asiatic Turkey. But they never rivaled the old days of adventure and Empire, those commercial speculations.

E P I L O G U E

The original Euphrates Expedition and, to some extent, the revived Expedition have been shown here as classic cases of poor planning and lack of foresight, on both the Governmental and operational levels. A great deal of this lay with the duality of responsibility shared by the Home and the Central and Bombay Governments in India. Too, fault may be found with those who were in command on the spot. As adventure in pursuit of a dream, through all the back-breaking, heart-breaking months of labor and disappointment it was in highest spirit of Empire and only as a labor of love, and by courageous and confident men, could the dream have been pursued at all.

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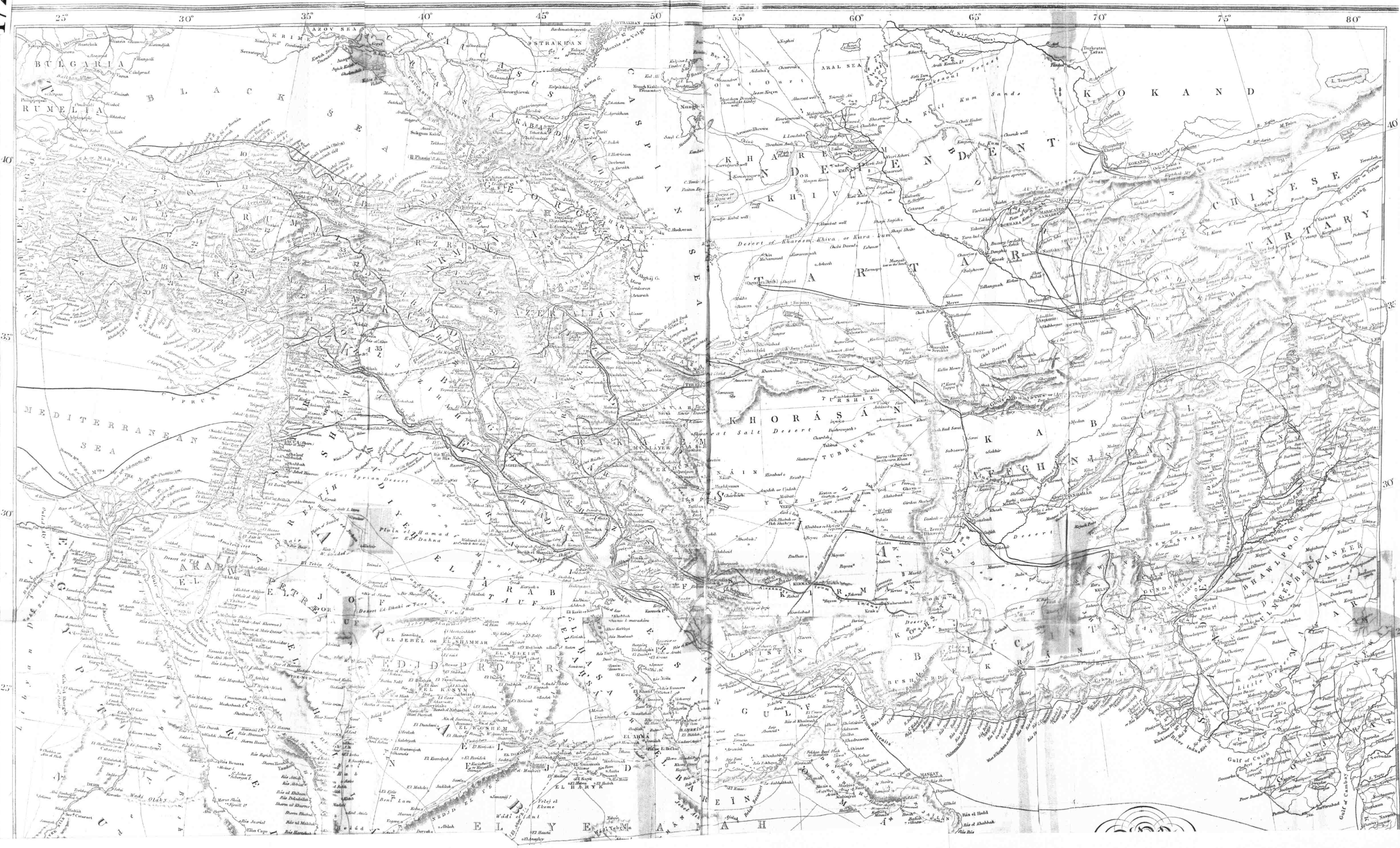
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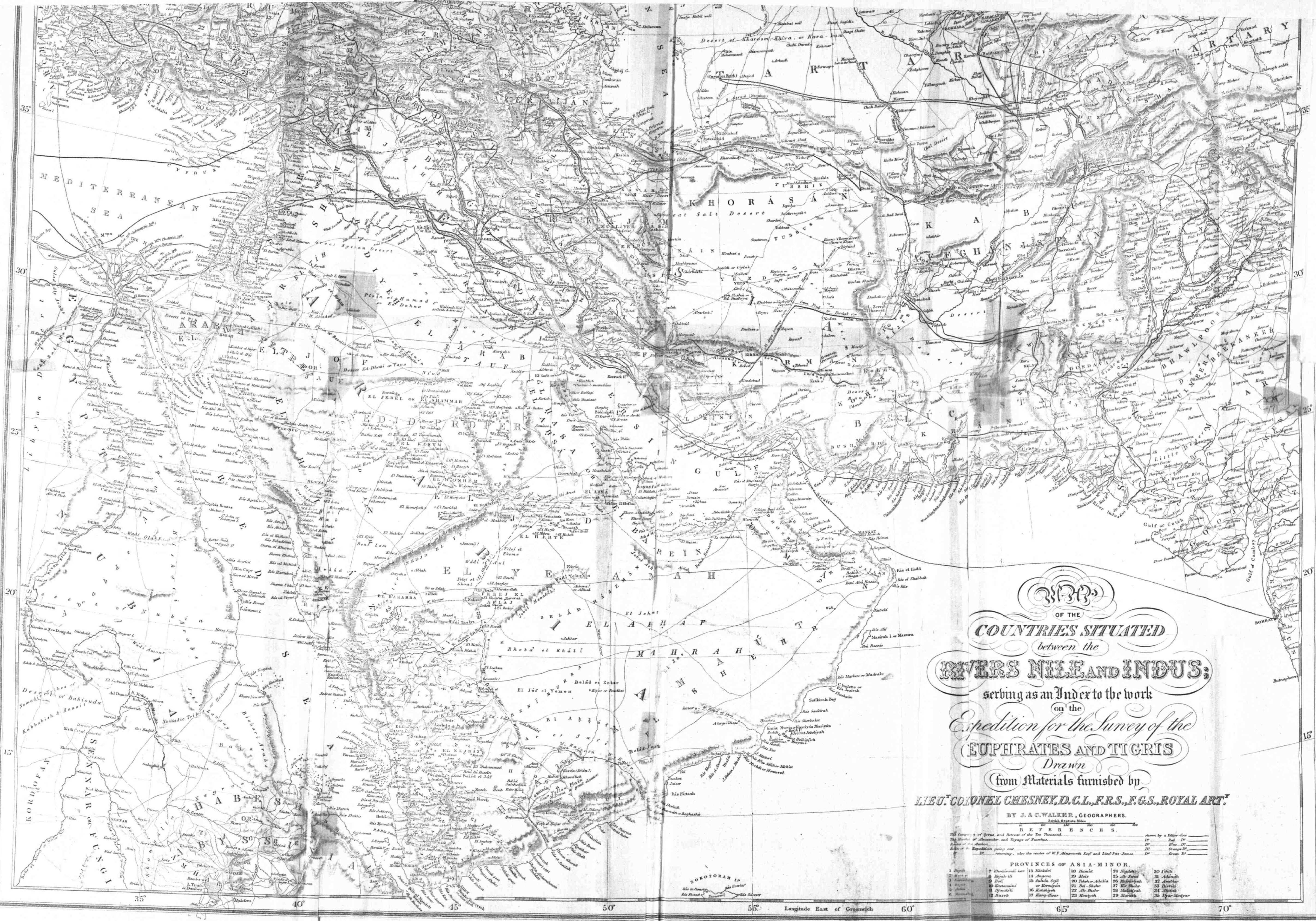
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 OF THE
COUNTRIES SITUATED
between the
RIVERS NILE AND INDUS;
 serving as an Index to the work
on the
Expedition for the Survey of the
EUFRATES AND TIGRIS
Drawn
 from Materials furnished by
LIEUT. COLONEL CHESNEY, D.C.L., F.R.S., F.G.S., ROYAL ART.
 BY J. & C. WALKER, GEOGRAPHERS.

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The Course of the Nile, and River of the Ten Thousand.	shown by a Dotted line
The Route of Alexander and Voyage of Nearchus.	do. Red. D.
Route of Scudron.	do. Blue. D.
Route of Expedition going out.	do. Orange. D.
do. returning, also the route of W.F. Alworth Esq. and Lieut. Pitt-Jones.	do. Green. D.

PROVINCES OF ASIA-MINOR.

1. Lycia	7. Bithynia	13. Cilicia	19. Macedonia	25. Cappadocia
2. Caria	8. Mysia	14. Pontus	20. Lydia	26. Armenia
3. Lydia	9. Phrygia	15. Bithynia	21. Phrygia	27. Armenia
4. Ionia	10. Lycia	16. Bithynia	22. Lycia	28. Armenia
5. Aeolia	11. Lycia	17. Bithynia	23. Lycia	29. Armenia
6. Mysia	12. Lycia	18. Bithynia	24. Lycia	30. Armenia

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