BAGHDAD AND AFTER.

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T
HE fall of Baghdad has elicited so much comment in the press of the country, and is an event of such immeasurable importance, that it may not be out of place in these pages to offer some remarks by way of explanation of certain aspects of its significance.

The city is said to contain within its precincts some 100,000 to 130,000 inhabitants. These figures, which have been adopted by the *Times* (12th March, 1917), are far below the limits of truth; the inaccuracy, however, must not be attributed to the *Times*, but to the imperfect Turkish census. Those aware of the utter deficiency of the Turkish survey of population would add at least one-third to the total given in official registers, whilst at the same time we must not overlook the fact that in Mesopotamia the male population alone is registered. A woman, and especially a married woman, is a haram, a sacred thing, and no one is allowed to call her by her name except a husband, a father, a brother, or a near relative, since a wife does not adopt her husband's name on marriage. It follows, therefore, that a great secrecy surrounds her Muslim name. In the census of 1911-1912, which immediately followed the so-called Constitution, the inhabitants of Mosul were given as 95,000, those of Baghdad as the double of this number, or approximately 192,000, and those of Basrah less than the half of those of Mosul, i.e. 43,000. After making every allowance for uncertainties under this heading, I should be tempted to give 130,000 to Mosul, from 200,000 to 230,000 to Baghdad, and some 40,000 to 50,000 to Basrah. These three localities are the three main cities of actual Mesopotamia. Basrah and its dependencies represent the old Chaldaean hegemony, Baghdad the Babylonian Empire, and Mosul the old Nineveh, which was the centre of the Assyrian Empire. Taken together, these cities form a complete and inseparable whole, so far as language, manners, and customs are concerned. It is inconceivable, therefore, that one power should hold under its
sway Basrah without Baghdad, or Baghdad without Mosul. In the
domain of commerce Baghdad is certainly the most important of
the three, although in British and Indian goods Basrah is rela-
tively more active. Mosul generally receives its supplies of cotton goods
through the ports of Syria. Apart from dates, Basrah derives from
Baghdad many of the articles which she exports to Asia or Europe, and
Baghdad owes to Mosul the greater part of her export trade in gall-nuts,
wool, etc. At least one-third of the wheat and barley consumed in
Baghdad comes from Mosul, but the former has transactions on a grand
scale with Persia, with which the latter could not stand in competition.

The religious standpoint of the two towns is as follows:

MOSUL.—Of Christians: there are about 12,000 of the East and
West Syrian Church; of Jews: about 3000; whilst the rest of the
population are exclusively Sunni Muslims.

BAGHDAD.—Of Christians: there are about 7500, mostly of the
East Syrian Church; of Jews: about 30,000; whilst the rest of the
population is Muslim, almost equally divided between Shiahs and Sunnis.

From a Christian standpoint Mosul is far more important, con-
taining as it does two theological seminaries, the seats of both the
Chaldaean and Syrian Patriarchs, and the residence of the Apostolic
delegate of Mesopotamia, Armenia, and Kurdistan.

The main features of the history of Baghdad can easily be de-
lineated. In olden times it was its vilayet which gave birth to the
first civilization in the world. The staunchest Egyptophiles admit
that a part of the early Egyptian civilization is traceable to the
dwellers of the lower villages of the Mesopotamian delta. It is
certainly from that part that the first code in the community of man-
kind has emanated, and it is possibly there that the uplifting art
of writing was invented. In later generations, the dealings of the
Kings of Babylonia with the classical people of Yahweh have
made the name of Nebuchadnezzar, and some other potentates known
to the least advanced of Christian, Jewish, and Mohammedan literary
circles. After experiencing different vicissitudes the country found
itself with Seleucia, the capital of the Seleucids, and with Ctesiphon,
that of the Arsacids or Parthians, and of the Sasanids. After the
battle of Yarmuk and Qadesiya, and at the coming into power of
the Omayad Caliphs of Damascus, it looked for a while as if the
centre of gravity was shifting to Syria proper. This anomaly was,
however, of short duration, and the Abbasid Mansur, in laying in
762 the first foundations of the actual Baghdad, made it for centuries the first city of the world with regard to population, science, and civilization, and consequently the pivot on which the Arab Empire moved, till its overthrow by the Mongol hordes of Hulakhu in 1258. After many changes the city passed into the hands of the Turkish Sultan Murad in 1638.

The temperature of the city is rather hot in summer, and the well-to-do people make a practice of going into sardabs or cellars of varying depth, where they remain until 4 or 5 p.m. There large cloth-fans called pankas, worked to and fro by a servant, cause a current of air to pass over the perspiring faces of the inmates of the house. Towards the evening all ascend to the flat roofs of the dwelling to enjoy the night-fall breeze which almost invariably rises sometime before midnight. This source of relief is unfortunately interrupted for about a fortnight by the shargi gales, which make themselves felt in a strange way. The dust-storms and violent winds which accompany them render sleep on the roof almost impossible, and the household resorts again to its pleasant sardabs or bedrooms. A considerable number of the inhabitants betake themselves in autumn to the gardens, extending in some places to a width of many miles on both sides of the Tigris, to enjoy there the pleasure of ripening dates and oranges. A feast of barban dates might indeed tempt even an "All-Highest" and a "Vice-gerent of God".

Generally speaking, the climate is, however, healthy and innocuous, and many inhabitants of that most unhealthy town of Basrah, go to Baghdad in summer to avoid the shivering sensations of the fever which undermines the strength of the toughest Mesopotamian Goliath. Arab scholars have uttered a saying worthy of consideration by every traveller to, or dweller in, the cradle of humanity (in Yakut, 4, 683): "A stranger who lives one year in Mosul, his body will show forth emblems of strength; a stranger who lives one year in Baghdad, his intelligence will show signs of increase".

The effect of the fall of Baghdad on Islam and the East in general will be due to the following considerations:

1. No Muslim in the world but knows the names of Maccah and Madinah, and certainly none of them can afford to ignore the name of the city of the Caliphate. The holy places contain simply a scanty memorial of the one who once led the world to the cult of Allah, but Baghdad is the personification of the power given to the Prophet of Allah. Muhammad died in Arabia, but continued to live through
the Caliphs of his house residing in the "City of Peace". The inhabitants of Upper Mesopotamia believe that Baghdad is immortal, in the same way that the Roman Catholics of the world believe Rome to be immortal. In the case of unhappy events occurring, they say "Baghdad has not been destroyed," meaning "It is not yet the end of the world". These considerations make of Baghdad a holy place of the first importance. Close to it the main Shiah shrines of Karbalah serve to unite the two branches of the Muslim world in their veneration of the capital of the Arab Empire.

2. No less important is the fact that nearly all Muslim theological, judicial, and historical books have seen the light in Baghdad and in the surrounding districts. Was it not there that the second sacred book of Islam, the repertories of the Sunnah, the Sahih of Bukhari and his imitators were written? What shall we say about the annals of Tabari, and the Arabian Nights, to mention only two from hundreds? How many pilgrims are to be found in the narrow streets of the city from different parts of the Muslim world, from Morocco as well as Algeria, from India as well as Persia! The only Muslims who make no pilgrimage are the nominal Muslim Turks of Constantinople, and the only Muslims who have declared an unlawful holy war is the gang of free-thinkers and rationalists pretending to be the successors of the Prophet.

3. Without pretending that from a military point of view the fall of Baghdad would be equivalent to a rout of the enemy in the plains of Flanders, it is, however, to be considered as of great importance. We have often forgotten that Turkey had occupied the best part of Persia, and might at any time by a single stroke have endangered from the rear the positions of the Russian army in Armenia and northern Persia. This danger has been removed. The Turkish troops, deprived of their base at Baghdad, will be obliged to fall back from Kermanshah on Suleimaniya or Karkuk, with their main base in Mosul, but this is a route of a very tortuous and difficult character.

Of one thing we may be quite certain, the whispering galleries of the Near East will re-echo with the news of the fall of Baghdad in an even more intensified form than the elect nation of the prophets echoed it in the days of yore. Many soothsayers will repeat in a mysterious and mystical language, "Babylon is fallen, Babylon is fallen". The effect of this semi-magical formula cannot fail to be considerable on the Muslim mind, and on the Arabs in general.