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BAGDAD



Al Maidan, a New Street Through Center of Bagdad.

PEOPLE are apt to be disappointed in Bagdad, but this is not unnatural unless one bears clearly in mind that what one sees today is a comparatively modern Turco-Arabian town and not the city of romance of Arabian Nights entertainments that one has probably imagined. That old Bagdad, or rather Dar-es-Salam as it was originally called, was built in the year 763 A. D. by Al Mansur, the second Abbasid caliph, out of the ruins of the city of Ctesiphon. It saw its palmiest days in the time of Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, the fifth of the Abbasid line, who flourished from 786 to 809 A. D. The city soon after this came to its end.

The caliphate was for political reasons moved to Samarra in 836 and when it was brought back again to Bagdad in 892, a new city was built on the opposite, i. e., left, bank of the Tigris, a mile or two downstream from the old site. Of Dar-es-Salam nothing now remains but a few indistinct mounds, says a writer in the Times of India Illustrated Weekly.

It cannot even be said that the new capital of which we have just spoken is the Bagdad that we know today. The site has remained the same, but of the city there is now nothing above ground that can be identified as being nearly as old as 892. Bagdad has suffered more often and more severely from destruction and decay than European or Indian cities, even taking into account such incidents as the great fire of London or the sequence of events that has produced the seven capitals at Delhi, or the cheery habit of the old Roman emperors of pulling down the buildings of their predecessors in order to build finer ones for themselves. Twice has Bagdad been sacked: in 1258 by the Mongols under Haku Khan and again in 1400 by Tamerlane. It has been besieged many times and flooded still more often.

Such a life would be bound to tell on the constitution even of a well-built city and Bagdad was not that. It was built with inferior building material and as often as not with inferior skill, and its sufferings have entirely changed it during the course of time.

Few Old Buildings Remain.
How thoroughly had the construction of some buildings has been—more particularly in modern times—may be judged from the fact that two large minarets belonging to one of the mosques of the city, which were built within the memory of the inhabitants of Bagdad, have already lost their top stories. But this, of course, is an extreme example. On the other hand there is the Khan Aurtmah, a large brick vaulted building in the center of the city, which is, in its way, as wonderful a piece of construction as one can see anywhere. It was built in 1350 and is still in use and in excellent preservation. The Marjanisah mosque, close by, and having as part of its endowments the income derived from the Khan Aurtmah, is another fine old building. It was built two years before the Khan and is of considerable architectural merit.

A few fragments of an earlier date are to be found in different parts of the city. Some portions of the old fortification of mustashir, for example, and the eleventh century minarets of Suqal-Ghaal and of the Qamariyah mosque and, at any rate, some of the walls of the old Mustanssariyah college (eleventh century) may be mentioned. But there are no other old buildings as complete as the khan and the mosque.

Beautiful—From a Distance.
Apart from these few examples of an earlier period, the Bagdad we know today is of the seventeenth or eighteenth and succeeding centuries, which in terms of architecture is comparatively modern. Judged in this light Bagdad is not disappointing. It is, particularly for a Mesopotamian town, quite a delightful place. From the dis-

tance it presents a most attractive picture. From miles away in the desert one can see the green mass of Bagdad floating in the atmosphere and as one approaches nearer along the dreary, dusty track, its colored domes and gilded minarets can be distinguished showing above the palms and trees. As one enters the town most of this is lost to sight and one finds oneself in a narrow winding street. The walls on either side are usually very bare. Every now and then one passes a door, sometimes plain, sometimes quite ornate with jolly brass door knockers. Above, from the first floor are projecting oriel windows, these, too, varying from plain brick and timber to carved wood of great richness—with pierced screens, often of very beautiful design. But be they plain or fancy, they cast a pleasant shadow on the road beneath and incidentally block out from view except for a glimpse here and there, the domes or minarets which were so noticeable from outside the city walls.

Out of the maze of these narrow streets one would never emerge had it not been for the kindness of the Turk, who very thoughtfully cut a broad road right through the center of the town in commemoration of the fall of Kut. Now, in our day, we use it for the main stream of traffic.

But the most charming feature of Bagdad is the river front and this alone is sufficient to compel one's admiration for the city. Basra in comparison is all mud and shipping. Amara is pretentious with a row of buildings of uniform design facing on a promenade, which reminds one too much of a terrace on the "front" of a small seaside resort. Kut is picturesque too, but designed on a scale befitting its size and importance, and with its mosques and public buildings, the palms and the trees and more especially the numbers of delightful river-side houses, with their verandas and balconies and their exquisite little gardens overhanging the river, Bagdad has a character and a charm all its own.

OLD LONDON MADE MODERN

Circumstances Under Which the Traveler May See All That He Has Traveled Far to See.

St. Etheldreda, in Ely place, Holborn, London, is one of the old city churches about which Dickens declaimed a full half of his pleasure in them arose from their mystery. That they existed in the streets of London was a sufficient satisfaction to him, but possibly he would have added St. Etheldreda to the list of the three famous old churches whose names he admitted were household words, if, on his night walks abroad he had heard the watchman cry the hour, as Etheldreda's watchman does to this day. Old London, lurking up byways and round corners, is still to be discovered by the curious who carry the lantern of a certain knowledgeableness. The cry, "Past ten, past eleven," from the watchman of the church with the Saxon name, lying off Holborn with its asphalt pavements and motor buses, bears witness to the assertion.

Lawsuit Lasted 478 Years.
A lawsuit regarding Rhodestan mining rights, which has reached the house of lords in its fourth year, is quite a legal infant when compared with some that have preceded it. The Thellusson will case, for example, dragged out in the courts from 1797 to 1857. Another similar action at law, known as the Bishop-Demetra will case, lasted 122 years. Even this, however, is not a record, for in 1908 there was settled at Friens a lawsuit that had been in progress since 1430. The raising of a dam was the point at issue and it occupied the courts for exactly 478 years.

A BOSTON VIEW OF THE LEAGUE

"The League Covenant, prefixed to the treaty of peace, and now awaiting ratification, may have among its articles, some dubious propositions, and even possibility of risk to national security, but it is unquestionably the greatest document of political idealism and the most impressive evidence of the world's desire for deliverance from the curse of war, which human history has ever recorded. Obstruction of its endorsement is to be expected from those who are concerned for nothing but their own immediate profit, or who fancy that they can save America and abandon the rest of the world to chaos.

"Short sighted self-interest, partisan policies and national provincialism are the natural enemies of magnanimous statesmanship. The view of religion is the precise opposite of all this. It holds that men walk not by sight, but by faith; that the things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal. Whatever be the differences among the churches, they unite every day in the prayer that the Kingdom of God come on earth. In a sordid, selfish, shut-in world, they represent the reality and efficiency of idealism.

"Now, the League Covenant definitely represents this new view of life. Its provisions may not be immediately realized; its program may be amended; its responsibilities cannot be free from risk; but in a degree without precedent or parallel it expresses the faith of the nations in a hitherto unrealized fraternalism; the great hope that the world may be diverted from armaments and bloodshed to conciliation and peace. Of all the schemes of statesmanship which the world has seen, this is the nearest approach—one might say the only approach—to fulfilling the prayer. "Thy Kingdom Come."

"Whatever, then, other people—politicians, traders, little Americans or scoffers—may have to say of this instrument now awaiting approval, there should be no doubt in the mind of the churches and their ministers. The course of events has thrown

destiny of the world into their hands. The horrible experience of war has compelled statesmen to attempt a scheme of political idealism. What the churches have been praying for, with scant hope of realization, is actually, and on a vast scale, proposed to the nations of the earth. If then the churches and their representatives do not accept this chance for promoting, however imperfectly, the ideals which are their chief reason for existence, it is likely to be the last chance they will have in this generation at least, to prove that they mean what they pray."—Boston Herald.



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