

Great Railway System Planned to Develop Asia Minor



BEDOUINS OF THE DESERT

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BIRUT—(Special Correspondence to The Bee.)—The Turkish empire is on the edge of a railway development. More than 4,000 miles of road have already been built, and lines are planned which will eventually connect Constantinople with Mecca and Medina, which will open up the rich plains of Asia Minor, and, going down to Bagdad, make the valley of the Euphrates equal as a wealth producer to the valley of the Nile. Since I landed in Syria I have traveled over much of its railroads. My first trip was from the port of Jaffa up the mountains of Judea to the city of Jerusalem. My second was on the Mecca road from the lower end of the Sea of Galilee through the great plains of the Hauran to Damascus, and my last was from Damascus over the mountains of Lebanon to this port of Beirut on the Mediterranean sea. During the latter trip I went from Rayak, in the valley of Lebanon between the two ranges of mountains, along the road which has been built northward through Colesyria to Aleppo, which will probably connect with the Bagdad line.

The Railway to Mecca.

All of these roads are comparatively new and some are still building. The Mecca line now runs as far south as Medina, where Mohammed came after his flight from Mecca, and where his tomb is. Medina has something like 40,000 people, and it is one of the most fanatical of the Moslem centers. It will be the chief stopping place on the way to Mecca.

Mecca lies about 250 miles still farther south and the track is being laid toward that point. There are two Christian civil engineers in the surveying party, but the people are so intolerant that the engineers are kept hidden the greater part of the time and do their work inside the tents. They are not allowed to spy out the land, to see or be seen.

The Bedouins are now causing the contractors considerable trouble. The road will take a large part of the pilgrimage traffic, and this, it has been estimated, is worth to Arabia something like \$10,000,000 a year. Much of the money goes to the owners of the camels and the leaders of the caravans. These men are Bedouins, many of whom have been employed in the construction and in supplying the other laborers with food. Now that the line is nearing its completion the Bedouins have lost their jobs. They are objecting to the railway and have torn up the tracks in many places. They are opposed to the soldiers of the Turkish government and the result is a great unrest which may cause a revolution.

Pilgrim Cars

The traffic on the Constantinople-Damascus and Mecca railways will largely be made up of pilgrims on their way to worship at Mecca and Medina. As it is now, with nothing but camels to carry them, it is estimated that something like 400,000 go there every year, and it is believed that the railway will increase the traffic from 50 to 100 per cent. Christians and other unbelievers will not be carried to the holy cities, although they may make tours to Petra and other parts of Arabia.

This Mecca railway will have special accommodations for Mohammedans. Certain of the carriages will be fitted up as mosques, so that the travelers may perform their devotions during the journey. The praying carriages will be luxuriously furnished. The floors will be covered with Persian carpets and around the sides will be painted verses from the Koran in letters of gold. A chart will indicate the direction of Mecca so that one can always turn his head the right way when he prays, and there will also be a minaret on the top of the car six and a half feet high. These cars, I am told, are being built at Constantinople.

The Mecca road is a narrow gauge, with French rolling stock. The material has been imported from Europe, the ties being of iron to withstand the white ants, which eat anything wooden. One of the great difficulties of construction has been the lack of water. The road goes for long stretches through the desert and many of the trains carry tanks to supply the engine.

By Rail to Damascus

I traveled over a part of this Mecca road on my way from the holy land north to Damascus. Leaving Tiberias in the early morning, I was rowed by four lusty Syrians across the Sea of Galilee to Samach, which is the station on the lower end of that sea, and the place where a branch line runs off to Haifa. From there northward we skirted the east side of the Sea of Galilee, passing the hills upon which our Savior preached and where He drove the devils into the swine. We rode up the valley of the Yarmuk, a stream almost as large as the Jordan, which loses itself in the Jordan farther south. We climbed the foothills of Lebanon, and at about 2,000 feet above the surface of the Sea of Galilee reached the rich plain of Hauran, the great bread basket of the Bedouins. It grows



RAILWAY STATION IN THE LEBANON MOUNTAINS

wheat and other grain, and the land near the track was covered with poppies, golden daisies and wild red hollyhocks. We could see Bedouin camps everywhere. They are made up of brown tents five or six feet high and are so low that the people have to stoop to get in. Outside each little settlement was an inclosure for the stock, and on the lands nearby cattle and camels were grazing. As we traveled we could see great flocks of black goats feeding on the sides of the Lebanon mountains. They hung to the cliffs and looked much like flies on the wall. There were also droves of black cattle and many flocks of white sheep, each carrying a tail of the size of a sofa pillow, which hung down like an apron, half hiding its legs.

The cars were crowded with Turks, Syrians and Bedouins, but on the advice of a friend I gave the conductor a dollar, and in return had a compartment all to myself. Baksheesh will do anything in Syria. As Shammas, my guide, put it: "The franc is the wheel upon which the world goes round."

Steaming Over Holy Places

It seems almost sacrilegious to travel by rail in the footsteps of the prophets, and the ghosts of the saints may be roused by the shriek of the locomotive. This road to Damascus, beginning with the branch line to Haifa, skirts the edge of Mount Carmel, where Elijah lived in a cave and where he contended with the 450 prophets of Baal and caused their destruction. It goes up the plain of Esdraelon, where the fair Jesseb lived, and where Jolu galloped to Jezreel on his race for the throne. It takes you in plain sight of Mount Tabor and under the hills of Nazareth, where the Savior's boyhood and young manhood were spent. It crosses the spot where Jael was camping when Sisera came and she lulled him to sleep to drive the tent pole into his forehead, and it then goes on up to Damascus over a route which was probably traveled by Abraham, David and Solomon, and by St. Paul when he was blinded by the great light and warned not to kick against the pricks.

The road to Jerusalem goes over the plains where the Israelites fought with the Philistines, through the country of Samson, which I have already described, and near the place where David with his little stone the great Goliath slew.

A New Story of Cain and Abel

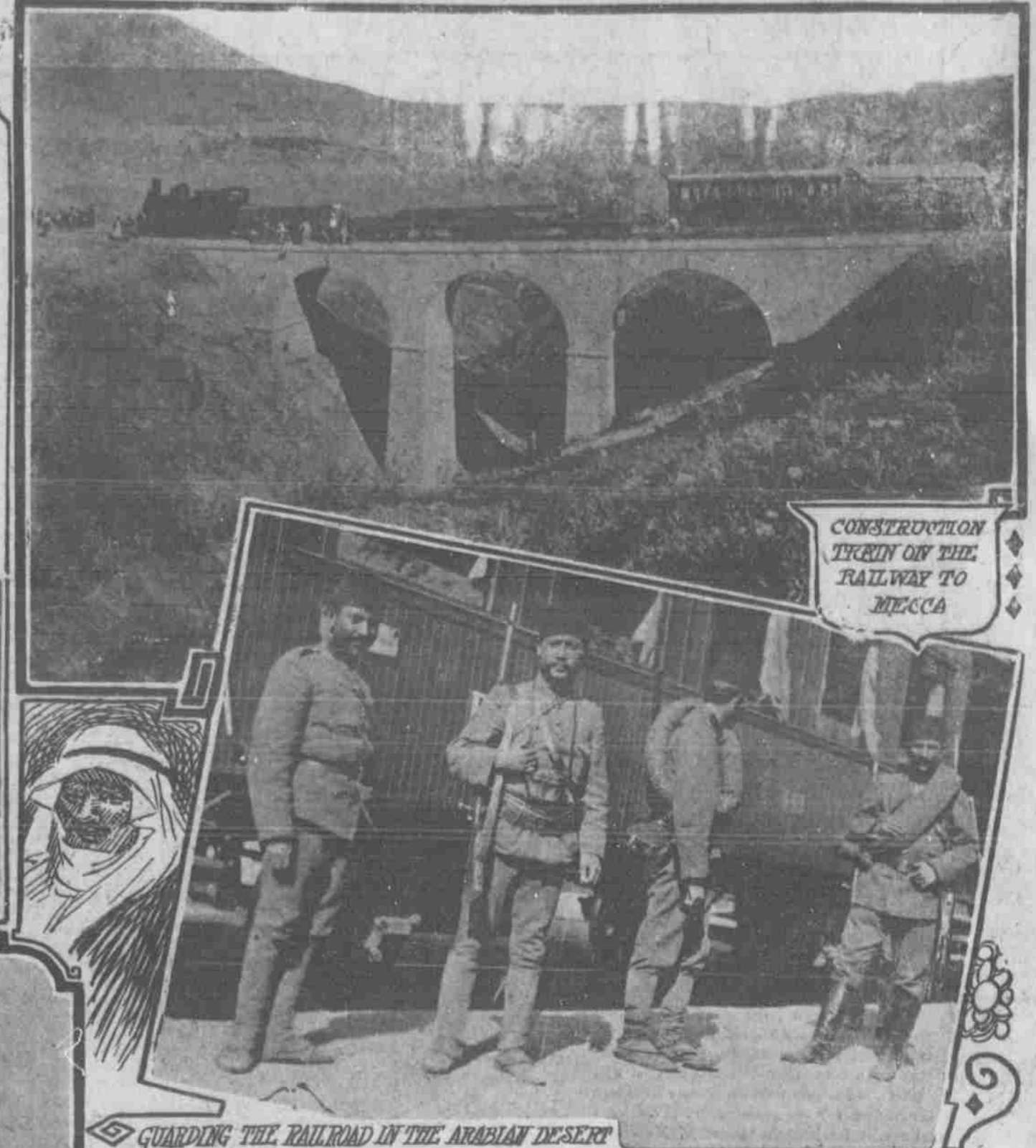
The railway from Damascus to Beirut shows you Mount Hermon, so famed in the Psalms, and passes numerous places which, according to the Mohammedans, were the homes and tombs of the prophet. Take, for instance, Suk Wadi Baroda, a little valley oasis made up of flat-roofed mud houses, surrounded by orchards and vineyards, on the way to Babelk. It is mentioned by Josephus and is referred to in St. Luke as the home of the tetrarch Lysanias. The Mohammedans say that Adam lived in the mountain which looks down upon it and that it was near the oasis itself that Cain became jealous of Abel and slew him. I have always thought that Abel was killed with a club, although I see now that the Bible does not mention the weapon used in the murder. According to the Moslem tradition it was a stone. The story is that Adam had divided the world into two sections and had given one of them to each of his boys. They had marked out their respective possessions with stones, when a dispute arose concerning the boundary line. Cain claimed that Abel was inching on him, whereupon high words sprang up, and Cain threw a

rock which struck Abel in the temple and killed him. According to the Moslem tradition Cain was thereupon filled with remorse. He did not know what to do with his dead brother, and he took the body on his back and carried it with him over the world for 500 years. At the end of that time he returned to this mountain, where he saw two birds fighting. At last one killed the other and it then washed and buried the one slain. Cain did likewise with Abel and straightway there sprang up seven oak trees, which are pointed out to this day.

According to the same authorities Seth Adam's son, who took the place of Abel, lived on the western slope of the Lebanon range, and his tomb is still there. A mosque is built over it and the tomb may be seen through an iron grating. It is eighty feet long, but the people living in the village nearby say that it was too short, notwithstanding, and that Seth's legs had to be doubled up in order to fit. Not far away is the tomb of Noah, which is forty feet longer. It also has a mosque connected with it.

High Passenger Rates

The distance from Damascus to Beirut is ninety-one miles and the first-class fare is just under \$5, or more than 5 cents per mile. By second-class it costs over 3 cents, and on the third-class or the mixed trains it is less. Travelers are recommended not to take the third-class and women should always go first. The first-class has compartments eight feet wide



CONSTRUCTION TRACK ON THE RAILWAY TO MECCA

GUARDING THE RAILROAD IN THE ARABIAN DESERT

running across the cars at right angles with the engine. Each compartment has two cushioned benches facing each other, its sides are walled with windows and there is a door at each end. The conductor does not go through the cars, but collects the tickets from the outside, walking along a step running the full length of each car and holding onto an iron bar which is fastened to the outside some distance above the step.

The road is picturesque and gives magnificent views of the Lebanon mountains. The track winds its way up and down the hills, and the western side of the range is so steep that the cars are taken up on cogs, after the same manner as on Pike's peak, Mount Washington and the Riggs. There are twenty-five stations, mostly two-story buildings of stone.

The passengers are made up of the conglomerate mixture of humanity found in this part of the orient. There are scores of Syrians in long coats and trousers, some wearing red fez caps, and others having turbans or handkerchiefs wrapped around their heads. There are Turkish officers in uniform, with swords at their sides, fez-capped boys in silk gowns, and other Moslems in turbans and gowns. There are Mohammedan women clad all in black and wearing black veils. There are pretty Greek girls, with bare faces, brown skinned women from the mountains, and Bedouins, who have ropes tied about the kerchiefs which half shroud their fierce features. There are also Persians, Druses and Christians of all sorts and conditions.

The trains go slowly in climbing the mountain. The average express makes less than sixteen miles an hour, and the mixed train takes twelve hours for the ninety-one miles.

By Rail to Bagdad

One of the chief subjects of discussion in the Turkish empire at present is the opening up of the rich valley of the Euphrates. This is the region in which Babylon and Nineveh flourished, and it has some of the best lands on the face of the globe. It has been suggested that it was the original site of the Garden of Eden. It is now reached only by the rivers and the Persian gulf, and there are no connections with the rest of the world except by caravan. The caravan trade now takes goods to Damascus, from where they go to the Mediterranean sea over the road I have just mentioned.

One of the newest schemes is a railway from

Damascus to Hit, a town on the Euphrates river, and another is one which connects with the railroads of Smyrna and Constantinople at Adana. The latter crosses the country above Aleppo and strikes the Tigris at Mosul, running down that river to Bagdad. The road from Damascus to Hit would be only about one-third as long. It is backed by the British, who have a great irrigation scheme for the plains of Mesopotamia. It is headed by Sir William Willcocks, who has gone over the ground, and is pushing the matter in London. Sir William Willcocks is the engineer who built the great Nile dam at Assouan, which has redeemed about 7,000,000 acres in Egypt.

His scheme includes irrigation works in the plains of Mesopotamia and also a navigable canal from Bagdad on the Tigris to a point on the Euphrates just below Hit. This would save seventy-five miles of railroad and would make Hit the terminus, with the rivers of the Tigris and Euphrates to draw from as water transportation routes. It is claimed that this road would pay largely from the freight traffic and that it would have also a large pilgrimage business through the Mohammedans, who annually go from Persia to Mecca. It would get many passengers who now travel by the Suez canal to India. When the present system is completed they could go from Paris to Constantinople by rail and thence by this route to Hit and Bagdad, from where they could steam on to the Persian gulf and across to India.

It is claimed that the line will not cost more than \$20,000,000 per mile, or about \$5,000,000 from Damascus to Hit.

The German Road to the Tigris

The other road which is planned to go to Bagdad itself is the one backed by the Germans. A concession for it was granted by the sultan in 1902 and a part of the line has already been built. The headquarters of the road is in Switzerland and bonds for a part of it have already been issued. The idea now is to begin the work at several different points. The route has been divided up into sections of 124 miles each; one of these will be started at Bagdad and more eastward; another will begin at Bulgurli, the end of the present line in Asia Minor, and will go to Adana and then on toward the east. The climate of the Adana plains is such that the construction can be continued this winter, and the same is true of the Euphrates valley. This syndicate is managed by the Deutsche Bank of Berlin, the Imperial Ottoman Bank of Paris, the Wiener bank and the Societe du Credit Suisse of Zurich. Loans to the amount of about \$44,000,000 will be issued. They will be guaranteed by the Imperial Ottoman government.

Opening Up of the Turkish Empire

The importance of these railway schemes cannot be overestimated. The new government has planned the development of Asiatic Turkey, a country which is ten times as big as New England and as well populated as Minnesota. In addition to the projects above mentioned is the Chester railway concession, which has been granted to Admiral Chester, a retired officer of our navy, and which now only awaits the ratification of Parliament. This involves the building of 1,500 miles of new lines covering the richest parts of Armenia, Kurdistan and Mosul, and embracing the upper portions of Mesopotamia. The road will begin at the Mediterranean and will run across Asia Minor to Persia, with numerous branches. It includes, also, the development of the country through which it goes and the opening up of a rich mineral region.

As to the resources to be developed by these new roads they are beyond description enormous; they include the coal fields of the Black sea, and mineral lands which have not yet been prospected. Asia Minor is rich agriculturally. The plains of Mesopotamia will raise anything that can be grown in Egypt, and the new irrigation schemes will make them as productive as they were when Nebuchadnezzar was reigning at Babylon. In ancient times that country had a population of over 6,000,000; it has not one-fourth as many today. I am told that cotton will grow not only there, but also throughout Asia Minor, and it may be that one of the chief competitors of our southern plantations will eventually be found in this now almost waste but exceeding rich part of the world.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Maligned and Misrepresented

WE OFTEN say a man is as brave as a lion. But lions, in proportion to their size and strength and weight and natural fighting abilities, are by no means so brave, as, say, pigs or foxes, or even the humble sheep. A good ram of the common domestic species will give battle to any living thing he meets. He will attack a full grown bull without the slightest hesitation, sometimes charging the bull off its feet at the first onslaught, and not uncommonly killing it outright, says a writer in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

The ram is always ready to defend, not only himself, but the flock of which he is in charge, against the largest and most ferocious dog, or even against human beings. A fight between two well-matched rams is one of the most terrifying sights in the world, and, as a rule, only ends in the death of one of the combatants.

It is common knowledge that the wild pig is the only animal that dares to drink at the same pool with a tiger.

Pigs are, perhaps, the most maligned of all animals. We say "as stupid as a pig," but a pig is not nearly so greedy as a canary, that has been known to consume its own weight in food in a single day, or even as a seal, that will gorge itself on fish until it cannot move fast enough to escape from an enemy.

To say to anyone that he is "as stupid as a pig," is merely to slander in the most gross way an animal whose intelligence is only a very little inferior to that of the ape or the dog. Whilst to talk of pigs being superlatively lazy is to ignore the fact that in various

countries of Europe pigs are trained to do the most arduous work, for eight or nine hours a day, truffle-hunting. "As lazy as a cat" would be far more appropriate, for cats really are lazy.

Donkeys, also, are supposed to be stupid, whereas, in fact, they are usually a good deal more intelligent than horses. When a horse is attacked by wild beasts, it takes to the open plain and runs at full speed until it drops down dead. But when a donkey is attacked it makes for the nearest cover, thrusts its head and body into a bush or a bed of nettles or thorns or brambles, or some dense undergrowth, and there stands its ground presenting only a pair of formidable heels to its assailant. And most animals find this means of defense more than they bargained for.

We say "as surly as a bear with a sore head," but it is fairly well known that all bears, except the polar bear, are the most good-humored, even-tempered and playful of the larger brutes. There is no animal more friendly to man, or more easily tamed, if it is treated with kindness.

"Blind as a bat" is another common expression. But a bat has such unusually acute powers of vision that it may almost be said to see with its skin. Even when it is deprived of its sight and placed in total darkness, it can find its way about unerringly among the most complicated arrangements of obstacles that scientific experts have been able to devise, without faltering or blundering an instant in its flight. And on the blackest night it can spy and follow and seize the most minute insects—insects invisible to the naked eye of man—with the most absolute certainty and precision, and with a truly amazing swiftness.