

COMMERCIAL OUTLOOK AFTER THE WAR.

(The New York Journal of Commerce.)

Nobody before the war would have dreamed of saying that Bagdad was destined to become a second Hamburg. Yet that prediction is confidently made by Colonel Sir Mark Sykes, who is not at all the type of man to allow his imagination to outrun his judgment. Nothing could better illustrate the transforming influence of the war on the world's commerce than the faith which such a statement implies, in the economic future of Asiatic Turkey. The rich agricultural area of which Bagdad is destined to be the centre, was once the granary of the East, and it needs only the restoration of the Babylonian system of irrigation to make it so again. The neglect of centuries, reinforced by the blighting rule of the Turk, has given one of the most extraordinarily fertile countries of the ancient world the semblance of a desert. When the Baghdad Railway began to bring Mesopotamia back within the circle of civilization, all expert observers were agreed that the restoration and proper maintenance of its old canals would restore the productiveness and the trade of past ages. But the Baghdad Railway was merely the outward and visible symbol of a grandiose project which took form in the German mind as the Confederation of Middle Europe, extending from the North Sea to the Persian Gulf, and owning the economic and political supremacy of the Teuton. Were that ever to come to pass, there would doubtless be a commercial and productive awakening for the seats of old-world civilization in Asia Minor, but it would be mainly for German exploitation. To the extent that other industrial nations would be able to profit by it, this new phase of the economic development of the world would be regarded as a failure by its German promoters, and it would necessarily lack the international co-operation needed to make it really significant. There could be no expectation then of Bagdad becoming a second Hamburg, because the illiberal commercial policy of Germany would prevent it from being the junction of some of the main routes of the world's trade, and the political apprehensions of Germany's rivals would drive them to divert, as far as they could, the currents of intercourse between Europe and Asia into other channels.

There is a much broader significance in the prediction of a great commercial future for Bagdad than that which relates to its immediate subject. It proceeds on the assumption that the era of political and military railroad building in Asia is at an end, and that henceforth commerce will take the place that military strategy has heretofore claimed as its own. It will no longer be a question of how to provide a railroad route to India independent of the natural one along the Euphrates Valley. There need be no further hesitation about joining the Cape to Cairo Railway with the line across Syria, or about linking the Persian system with both. It may yet be found necessary to construct a railway from Port Said to the head of the Gulf of Akabah, and thence across the neck of the Arabian Peninsula to Bassorah, near the Persian Gulf, but it will not be because it is the only short cut of the land route to India not under German control. The extension of the Baghdad Railway to Koweit will cease to be a question for diplomatic discussion, and will turn simply on whether the already ample facilities for water carriage need to be supplemented by those of the steel highway, and whether the extension of the Baghdad Railway, first from Bassorah to Shiraz and then to Karachi, the northwestern railhead of the Indian system, is a legitimate commercial enterprise. Nor should it be forgotten that the answer to that question must enter the larger consideration of a railroad linked with

MONTREAL STOCK MARKET.

Substantial gains were marked up on the Montreal stock exchange for the week ended August 11th, although in the mid-week, the buoyancy of the market suffered a severe reaction in sympathy with the weaker tone on the New York market. Yet advances were credited to a number of issues, including Laurentide, which gained 3 points. Dominion Bridge, which finished the week with a gain of 4 points, Canadian Locomotive which gained 10½ points, Nova Scotia Steel 10 points, Riordon 4½ points, and Smart-Woods 10 points. Still general conditions remain very much as they were and the volume of business only seems large by comparison with recent dullness.

FOOD ADMINISTRATOR APPOINTED IN UNITED STATES.

Herbert C. Hoover was formally named as Food Administrator to-day by President Wilson under authority invested in him by Congress, and immediately served notice on speculators and profiteers that the time of reckoning for those who would not co-operate in the efforts of the Government to obtain lower prices for the consumer and help supply the Allies of America in the war against Germany had come.

With the full approval of the President, obtained after a long conference at the White House recently, Mr. Hoover announced that the Food Administration would not hesitate to apply to the full the drastic and coercive powers that Congress had granted. It was at the same time a warning to those who had engaged in gambling with the food supply and in extortion, that the United States Government, through its Food Administration, was the only agency which could hope to successfully corner the food market.

In his statement Mr. Hoover outlined the needs of the Allies of America and the great part which he believed the consumers, as well as the producers, could play in alleviating suffering and distress. With proper co-operation and exercise of the unusual powers granted by the food bill, he felt sure the situation could be met. The powers, he said, would be used to protect honest and patriotic men against those who saw fit to gamble on the sufferings of others.

that through British Burma and traversing the upper valley of the Yangtze till it meets the Chinese lines converging at Hankow.

It can hardly be doubted that when the war is over, the last strip of the Mediterranean coast which remains under Asiatic domination will follow the way of Algiers, Morocco and Tunis, of Tripoli and Egypt, of the Greek Islands and Salonika. Colonel Sykes remarks that railway construction across the Syrian Desert will be so easy that probably Damascus will be connected with the Euphrates. There could be an open road across the flat desert for motor cars, and there is plenty of water if only it can be stored. He also lays emphasis on the fact that Bagdad is "almost a seaport." It is so for steamers of light draft, which take several days to make the trip to Bassorah. This latter is already an entrepot of international commerce, and with a development of trade routes of the modern kind across Asia Minor, could hardly fail to become one of the great ports of the world. In the future of Bagdad, the restoration of the navigation of the Euphrates must play a very considerable part. The river can be made navigable to the north as far as Mosul, the site of the ancient Nineveh, and with the restoration of the abandoned canal of Massodee, between Bagdad and Bassorah, the transit can be made easy for much larger craft than any now engaged in the trade. There are rich oil fields not far off, and according to Colonel Sykes, the "Black Country" of Mesopotamia may arise here with enormous demands for machinery and other equipment. Briefly, there will be provided here after the war a new highway for the commerce of nations, traversing an area whose restored fertility and productiveness will not be arrested by Turkish plunder or limited by the purely selfish aims of German exploitation, but will become a solid addition to the growing aggregate of the untrammelled international trade that may prove one of the most valuable legacies of the war.

"The necessities of life are a lot higher than they were a few years ago." "Yes, and just think how many more there are of them."—Boston Transcript

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