If I may trespass on your patience for a few moments longer I should like to touch briefly on the natural history of Oman before I conclude.

Only two of my predecessors appear to have taken any lively interest in the subject, namely my friend Col. Jayakar, of the Indian Medical Service, and Col. Miles. The former, a Mahratta by origin, was Agency Surgeon at Muscat for some five-and-twenty years, including my time there, and was a man of great industry and scientific bent. He made a very fine collection of the fishes of those waters, which he sent to the British Museum together with other smaller collections which he made from time to time.

I do not think he ever left the precincts of Muscat itself, but he always kept a vigilant eye for any natural-history object likely to be of scientific interest, whether bird, beast, or fish.

Col. Miles, situated like myself, used what opportunities he could snatch during his tours inland to collect specimens, but it will be realized, I think, that travelling under the conditions that he and I did, satisfactory collecting was no easy matter.

As regards mammals, the following seem of particular interest in the Oman fauna:

*Oryx Beatrix.* The Beatrice Oryx named after Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice.

*Hemitragus Jayakari.* Jayakar's Thar, named by Mr. Oldfield Thomas from two skins sent home by Dr. Jayakar. It has never been obtained or seen in its native haunts by any European sportsman.

*Gazella Muscatensis.* The Muscat Gazelle.

*Gazella Marica.* The Reem Gazelle.

A small hare (*Lepus Omanensis*).

A Hyrax and a Civet.

The latter is apparently the same form as that found in India and beyond and on the island of Socotra, and though now indigenous was probably at some period imported.

Among the birds only about 120 species have been collected by Col. Jayakar, Col. Miles, and myself, so that a great deal remains to be done.

Perhaps the most interesting items are:

The Muscat Bee Eater;

The Arabian See-see partridge; and

The black-headed Arabian Chukor partridge.

When it becomes a little more accessible to travellers, Oman will offer to the naturalist a field which has been very little worked.

Before the paper the President said: Our lecturer this evening is a gentleman who requires little introduction to an audience of this Society—Sir Percy Cox, whose acquaintance with the Persian Gulf and with the countries which hem it in on north and south has indeed been a prolonged one, starting from the time when he first proceeded as Consul and Political Officer to
Muscat in the year 1899. During that period, as he has risen from post to post—from Consul to Consul-General; from Consul-General to Political Resident in the Gulf; and then again after a period of service as Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, and as Chief Political Officer with one of the Indian Expeditionary Forces to the post of Acting Minister in Persia; and finally, to that of High Commissioner for Mesopotamia—Sir Percy Cox has rendered service to Great Britain of which his fellow-countrymen may well be proud. But it is not in the guise of a statesman or diplomat that he comes before us to-night. He is with us as a traveller who has made excellent use of the opportunities which his official position has provided from time to time of exploring some of the lesser-known parts of the Middle East. The particular journeys which Sir Percy Cox is to describe to us were undertaken a good many years ago into the thirsty hinterland of Oman. Few European travellers had penetrated to that little-known part before, and those who had had given somewhat meagre and perhaps not too accurate accounts of its geographical features. Sir Percy Cox to-night will be able to fill in the lacuna left by the very few travellers who preceded him, and possibly also to make some corrections in the geographical data which they have given us. I have now much pleasure in calling upon him to give us the account of his journeys.

Sir Percy Cox then read the paper printed above, and a discussion followed.

The President: There are not very many who can speak with first-hand knowledge of Arabia, but prominent amongst those who can is Mr. Philby. I will ask him if he will say a word or two.

Mr. H. St. J. B. Philby: I am sure you have all listened, as I have, with the very deepest interest to the account that Sir Percy Cox has given us of his travels in the Oman hinterland. There are a great many points which suggest comment on my part, but I must be brief. First, as to the question of climate. Sir Percy Cox has told us something about the horrors of "Elphinestone" Inlet, where the Indo-European Telegraph Department were scarcely able to keep their employees alive; he referred also to the heat at Baraimi, but said nothing very discreditable about the climate of Muscat, where he and Lady Cox are said to have spent five years. I suppose he refrained from telling us of the climate for a particular reason; for fear, for instance, that nobody would believe him. I think you will agree with me that neither he nor, if I may take the liberty of saying so, Lady Cox are particularly convincing advertisements of the unhealthy nature of the Persian Gulf climate in which they have passed not only five years, as one might have thought from to-night's lecture, but rather more than a quarter of a century. I am sure that both would willingly return and spend another quarter of a century in the same parts if they had a reasonable chance. I am sure that Lady Cox, at any rate, would prefer to do so, rather than stay in our own wretched climate. I should like to suggest that the secret of success under such conditions is obvious. You must like a place and your work in it so much that you have absolutely no time to think of its drawbacks and disadvantages.

Sir Percy Cox has referred to his travels as mere excursions. Well, they may have been; but mere excursions in countries which are unknown, or very little known, are apt to have a very considerable geographical importance, and this is no exception to the general rule. The fixing, for instance, of a place like Baraimi is a very definite geographical achievement, and so far as I
know, though I may be wrong, there is no other recorded instance of the successful manipulation of a ship's chronometer at any distance within the interior of Arabia. That is a very great achievement. Then the journey of more than 100 miles or so from Ras al Khaima to Dhank over territory which, except for Baraimi, had never been travelled by a European is something of a geographical achievement. And when I saw the map on the screen this evening it seemed to me that there were a good many additions as compared with the maps one is accustomed to see of that part of the world, and every addition represents a definite advance on the total sum of human knowledge. It seems to me a great pity that all the interesting information we have received this evening has been allowed to lie hidden in the dusty archives of the India Office for a quarter of a century. At any rate, better late than never, and after to-night they will be on public record in the pages of the *Geographical Journal*.

There is another point I should like to make. Although other preoccupations of perhaps greater importance have militated against Sir Percy Cox extending his Arabian excursions further into the interior, he has really made ample amends to humanity for this very serious shortcoming on his part, for he has never missed a chance of placing in the way of others opportunities to travel that circumstances denied to him. Only a short time ago Major Cheesman, to whom the Society has to-day awarded one of its great honours, was able to tell you that it was to Sir Percy Cox that he owed the chance he had of making that great expedition to the Jabrin Oasis, and I would like to take this opportunity of adding that it was also to Sir Percy Cox that I owed my year of very delightful exile in Central Arabia. I would go further and say that if, as I venture to predict, the twentieth century does for Arabia what the nineteenth century did for the exploration of Darkest Africa, and if that very large and ugly yellow horrid blank which we saw to the south of the central part of the Arabian map ceases some day to be large, yellow, ugly, or blank, the credit will be largely due, although indirectly, to Sir Percy Cox.

There is one point to which Sir Percy has not, I am sorry to say, had time to refer, though it is raised in his paper, which will in due course appear in the *Journal*. Sir Percy Cox quite calmly suggests that the riddle of the Great Desert, one of the greatest riddles remaining for geographical solution at the present day, could be solved by aircraft. I think that is a perfectly horrible suggestion. I hope we shall hear no more of it. But again referring to his paper and not to what he said to-night—I am sorry he had not time to say it—it is very interesting to me to note that the information he got on the Oman side of the desert exactly confirms and corroborates in detail the information which I was able to collect on the other side at Wadi Dawasir; that is to say, on the north-west side. It is of very ominous significance that the very three tribes that he mentioned in his paper in connection with crossing the desert are the very three tribes that my friends from the other side told me they were in the habit of raiding. That is very interesting, but in the circumstances it would, of course, be very important to make quite sure of the kind of reception one is likely to get on the other side before starting. But there is—and Sir Percy Cox is able to support this—no really, insuperable difficulty in the way of such a venture, though any attempt ought to be made, not by aircraft, but in the ordinary way of riding there on the back of a camel, and not behind the hump! And I would say that I think one has every right to ask His Majesty's Government not to add unnecessarily to the natural difficulties of such a venture by putting official obstacles in the
way of those who are foolish enough to want to do anything so silly. After
al, there are some people in these days of overcrowded populations who
could easily be spared from this world, and if the worst came to the worst—
and the person taking the risk would take care that it should be as small as
possible—one would not really expect His Majesty's Government to send
battalions of infantry into the waterless wastes to avenge one's death. I
speak with a certain amount of feeling and reason on that particular point.

Sir Percy Cox, you will remember, had to hurry over the last part both of
his lecture and his journey; the reason for the latter was that he had to catch
H.M.S. Amphitrite in order to join her for the purpose of a cruise in the
Persian Gulf, the object of which was to show the British flag. I venture to
think he did not justify the precipitancy which he showed in the matter.
He, it is true, went down to join the Amphitrite to show the British flag, which
after all was well enough known in those seas, but the Amphitrite could, I
am sure, have shown the flag under less expert guidance than that of Sir
Percy Cox. I would suggest that he was engaged in a very much more
important task in showing the flag in an area which on his own showing was an
area which did not know the flag. It is interesting to remember that a succession
of British visitors to those parts has resulted in a progressive improvement in
the manner of the inhabitants thereof. For instance, as Sir Percy told us,
Wellsland had a poor reception at Ibr, whilst fifty years later the next visitor,
Colonel Miles, had quite a good reception at Ibr, but rather an uproarious one
at Mazum. Sir Percy went through both with flying colours; in fact, he got to
Tanuf before he had trouble, and that only of a mild order. If only every
British political agent in Muscat, once in the course of his incumbency, would
make an excursion into the interior until he was stopped by the rudeness of the
natives, the interior of Oman would in the course of a few centuries come to
be as well known as it ought to be considering the length of time that it has
been under the benevolent protection of Great Britain; and the same applies
to an almost greater extent in the case of the Aden hinterland.

There is another point of considerable importance, and one on which I
feel somewhat strongly. You will realize from what Sir Percy Cox has said
that all his predecessors in the exploration of that part of the country, the
hinterland of Oman, number no more than three, and those travelled there at
very wide intervals—1835, 1885, and 1901. In the circumstances I think it
would be permissible and excusable to call Sir Percy Cox's attention to a
somewhat serious omission. I seem to remember some time ago—and I
refreshed my memory on the subject to-day—that Palgrave, in speaking of
his travels in Arabia, mentions having made certain little excursions of the
same description that Sir Percy told us about to-night, into the interior of
Oman from Muscat. They were nice little excursions. I was trying to puzzle
out the geography of them this afternoon, but the misfortune is this: that all
the places at which Palgrave stayed, and where he was entertained, appear to
have disappeared from the map. I should like to have heard what Sir Percy
Cox thought of those excursions, and I regard his omission as a little strange
in view of what he appears, according to the official report of the Society, to
have said at the meeting at which Major Cheesman read a paper. He there
made a definite attempt to support the reputation of Palgrave. It is a long
time since I talked about Palgrave, and I do not propose to talk very much
about him this evening. As, however, I was not present at the meeting at
which Major Cheesman took advantage of my absence to resuscitate the
Palgrave bogey and was supported by Sir Percy Cox and Dr. Hogarth, I
would like to take this opportunity of exploding a little theory in regard to which Dr. Hogarth is very persistent whenever he rises to defend the memory of a man who, after all, cannot defend himself. I have no objection to his doing that. But Dr. Hogarth explains Palgrave's admitted digressions from the path of strict truth on the ground that he had the great misfortune to be shipwrecked, and that during that shipwreck he lost all his notes. A statement of that kind made before a Society of this description by a person of the kind that Dr. Hogarth is ought to be considered absolutely convincing, for Dr. Hogarth is the greatest living authority on Eastern questions, and on Arabia in particular. I am very sorry indeed that Dr. Hogarth is not here this evening, because if he had been I should like to have asked him on what authority he makes the statement that Palgrave lost his notes on the occasion of his alleged shipwreck on the coast of Oman. He certainly did not get it from Palgrave himself, who goes out of his way to explain that he was rather proud at not having lost his notes on that occasion. As a matter of fact, on 23 January 1863, after his reputed wanderings in Arabia, he parted from his friend Barakat, who afterwards became an Archbishop, and to that man he consigned all the notes he had taken during his wanderings, and he goes out of his way to tell us that he took that precaution because he had a presentiment that he was going to be shipwrecked, and he adds that if he had not taken that precaution his book would never have appeared. The notes were perfectly safe and sound when Palgrave, after his shipwreck, rejoined his friend. He was duly shipwrecked according to his presentiment, but he had taken the precaution to preserve his notes; the only ones lost were those between 25 January 1863 and the date of the shipwreck, March 10. But even that line of defence does not explain Palgrave's vagaries in describing Oman, which he visited after the shipwreck. There is one more point suggested by the mention of Palgrave. Sir Percy Cox had considerable difficulty in regard to the name of Jabal Haft, and says that Dr. Samuel Zwemer calls it "Jebel Okdat" or "Jebel Akabat." But why does he single out Dr. Samuel Zwemer? After all, the authority for the name of Okdat was Palgrave, and one of Palgrave's companions was actually a resident of the village of Okda. That seems to have escaped Sir Percy Cox. As a matter of fact, he is no doubt right in saying the name of the hill is Jabal Haft after one of the villages at its foot; but if there is a village Sir Percy Cox has not seen on the other side of the foot called Okda, the hill might quite well be called Okdat also. The Arabs moreover have a peculiar method of nomenclature. They may call a place by what it looks like. Sir Percy told us Jabal Haft was a ridge about 20 miles long, with a pass or col in the middle. That is what the Arabs would call "Aquabat," meaning a pass. I am not sure about his interpretation of the word Okdat in Arabic. It may mean "sandhill," but I should expect it rather to refer to a difficult pass between sandhills; the word "Okda" ('Uqda) of course means a knot.

The President: If there are no other speakers I will convey to Sir Percy Cox the gratitude of this meeting for the time and trouble which he has taken in resuscitating the notes of his journey and giving us so delightful an account this evening. We now regard him as a most admirable photographer, for he showed us this evening one of the finest series of views of desert country which it has ever been my fortune to see.

*Note added by Sir Percy Cox:*

Owing to the lateness of the hour it was not possible for me to make any rejoinder to Mr. Philby's observations; but as it is of some little geographical
importance to clear up as far as possible existing doubt as to the name position, and extent of the "Jebel Okdat," it may be convenient if a summary of the record accompanies this paper. The italics are mine.

1835. Wellsted, in the map accompanying his 'Travels in Arabia,' shows a Jebel Okdat range, but in quite a different position from that discussed above. Wellsted's range begins 40 miles south of Baraimi and continues for 20 miles in a south-south-westerly direction. He shows no hill feature near Baraimi, which he places about 15 miles west of its true position. He did not himself reach Baraimi, so what he recorded was necessarily from hearsay.

1863. Palgrave, in his 'Eastern and Central Arabia,' writes: (a) (vol. 2, p. 301):

"On the morning of 16 February 1863 we sighted the Oman coast between Aboo-Debee and Dobey—long, low, and sandy, but well lined with palm groves and villages arranged along the glistering shore. Far in the distance like a cloud rose the heights of Bereymah or Djebel Okdah,..."

(Note.—From Palgrave's position at the time, in a sailing vessel some miles from the coast ('in sight of the coast," he says), the Bereymah Oasis could not have been much less than 100 miles distant.)

(b) Vol. 2, p. 339. Referring to his companions, on his voyage by dhow from Sohar to Muscat, during which he was ultimately wrecked, he writes:

"Besides these we had on board ten other fellow-passengers: two from Djebel Okdah... I now learnt from the men of Okdah many particulars regarding Bereymah and Dahireh, which may here find place. Of Bereymah itself they said that the town was strongly nestled amid the passes of the Djebel Okdah... that the Djebel Okdah itself was a lofty mountain equalling in height the range of Roos-el-Djebel: that the soil was light and the vegetation not less luxuriant than the Batinch; that beyond the Djebel Okdah extended, east and south, a long series of hills parallel to Djebel Akhdar."

(Note.—In the foregoing Palgrave does not mention or necessarily imply that there is a village of Okdah, and neither Miles nor I heard of any; but as regards the mountain range, even if the meaning—"sandhill"—which I suggest for Okdah, with good authority, is accepted, it is no doubt conceivable that Okdah—"Sandhills village"—and Djebel Okdah—"Mount Sandhills"—may be used synonymously for Haft. Palgrave places Bereymah in approximately its correct position, but he shows a mountain feature, representing or including his Djebel Okdah, stretching from a point 30 miles north of the oasis to Bahla, 120 miles south, i.e. 150 miles in all, whereas the feature, whatever its name, is actually 20 miles in length.)

1871. In the map issued by the Hakluyt Society in 1871, in connection with the Rev. G. P. Badger's 'Imams and Seyyids of Oman,' Jebel Okdat is evidently inserted on the basis of Palgrave's erroneous location of the feature.

1885. Now let us hear Colonel Miles on the subject. In his Muscat Administration Report for 1885-1886, he writes:

"The Wadi Dthank and the Wadi Boo Karba both join the Wadi Safa, a large watercourse in the Ramool desert, running to Abu Thabi, almost parallel to the Wadi Ain: the 'Jebel Okdat of Wellsted is purely mythical; there is no such range in that direction whatever except Haft, near Beraimi.'"

When Miles passed up to Baraimi from Sohar in 1875, he came in full view of Haft or whatever the mountain feature was in that neighbourhood, and when making the above remark he makes it from first-hand knowledge;
furthermore, he shows Jabal Hafit as an isolated mountain and in its correct
proportions in the paper on his journey contributed to the R.A.S. Journal of
Bengal, vol. 46, p. 41, 1875–76.
1902. Dr. Zwemer, in the Geographical Journal for January 1902, p. 62,
writes:

"On Tuesday we reach the oasis of Beraimi, a 4-mile stretch of fertile
palm country under the shadow of Jebel Hafid, the first spur of the
Okdat Range. It seems, after careful inquiry from several Arabs, that
the true name or at least a second name for this mountain range is
Jebel Okabat. The first name signifies 'knots,' the latter 'deep
defiles': both names are appropriate to the rugged outline of the range
as seen from the desert. . . . Beyond Beraimi, the road along the
Jebel Okdat range passes the following villages: Hafid, Senanah, El
Felai, Dank (or Danj) Jabil, Subaihi, Mamur, Abri. . . ."

I think it may be fairly deduced from the above, and from my personal
observation and notes, on my way from Baraimi to Iibri, that while the
expression Jebel Okdat may well be used by local Arabs synonymously for
Jabal Hafit, there is without doubt, no continuous mountain range in the
locality in question other than that referred to by Colonel Miles and myself
as Jabal Hafit, a feature starting 5 or 6 miles outside Baraimi and stretching
for 20 miles southwards. Wellsted went off the line in the first instance, and
apparently Palgrave, Badger's cartographer, and Zwemer followed him.

P. Z. C.

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THE DEMARCATION OF THE TURCO-PERSIAN
BOUNDARY IN 1913–14

Col. C. H. D. Ryder

Read at the Meeting of the Society, 8 June 1925.

This Turco-Persian Boundary, the delimitation of which in 1913–14
I shall describe, is a boundary with a past. It is remarkable, if
for no other reason, in that the three main efforts to settle it have each
been interrupted by a great European war. Without delving too far
into remote ages, the Turco-Persian frontier more or less assumed its
present position early in the seventeenth century; frontier forays from
both sides were of constant occurrence, as was only to be expected in a
country peopled with independent warlike tribes far removed from the
very slight influence that could be exerted over them from either Con-
stantinople or Tehran. I doubt whether there was ever any keenness
on the part of the tribes themselves to have any general settlement of
the frontier at any time; there is so much more fun and freedom in the
raiding line when nobody knows exactly where the frontier lies.

By 1842 however the British and Russian Governments became
closely interested in the matter, a joint commission of investigation being
despatched to the scene. Amongst the British Commissioners were
Colonel Williams (the famous defender of Kars in the Crimean war) and
the Hon. Robert Curzon, a cousin of the late Lord Curzon. They seem