clusters of grapes might be gathered two cubits in length." The Arab traveller Ibn Haukal, writing in the 10th century, remarks that "the fruits of Merv are finer than those of any other place, and one cannot see in any other city such palaces with groves and streams and gardens." A local proverb says, "Sow a grain to reap a hundred." All cereals and many fruits grow in great abundance.

The Turcomans possess a famous breed of horses,—not prepossessing in appearance, being somewhat leggy and long in the back and neck, but capable of accomplishing long distances—50 or 60 miles—for several days in succession, and with very little food. Their great peculiarity appears to be their hairlessness; the coat is very fine, the mane and tail very scanty. This breed of horses, as well as the wealth of the Merv Tekkes in camels and flocks, is fast disappearing.

The Turcomans are noted as excellent workers in silver and as armourers, and their carpets are superior to Persian. They also make felts and a rough cloth of sheep's wool.

One of the chief occupations of the male sex is the repair of the dams and the clearing of the canals, upon the efficiency of which their existence is dependent. The services of a large number of workmen are always held in readiness for the purpose. In 1878 the unusual mass of water in the Murghab carried away the dam, and the drying up of some of the canals nearly led to a failure of the crops.

Climate.—The position of Merv, in the midst of sandy deserts in the heart of Asia, makes the climate in the heat of summer most oppressive. The least wind raises clouds of fine sand and dust, which fill the air, render it so opaque as to obscure the noonday sun, and make respiration difficult. In winter the climate is very fine. Snow falls rarely, and melts at once.

History.—The name Merv, or some similar form, occurs at a very early period in the history of the Aryan race. Under Mouru we find it mentioned with Bakhdi (Balkh) in the geography of the Zend Avesta (*Vendidad*, fargard i., ed. Spiegel), which dates probably from a period anterior to the conquest of Bactria by the Assyrians, and therefore at least one thousand two hundred years before the Christian era. Under the name of Margu it occurs in the cuneiform inscriptions of Darius Hystaspis, where it is referred to as forming part of one of the satrapies of the ancient Persian empire (*Inscriptiones Behistani*, ed. Kossowicz). It afterwards became a province (Μαργιανή) of the Græco-Syrian, Parthian, and Persian kingdoms. On the Margus—the Epardus of Arrian and now the Murghab—stood the capital of the district, Antiochia Margiana, so called after Antiochus Soter, who rebuilt the city founded by Alexander the Great. About the 5th century, during the dynasty of the Sasanids, Merv was the seat of a Christian archbishopric of the Nestorian Church. In the middle of the 7th century the flood of Arab conquest swept over the mountains of Persia to the deserts of Central Asia. Merv was occupied 666 A.D. by the lieutenants of the caliph Othman, and was constituted the capital of Khorasan. From this city as their base the Arabs, under Kuteibe bin Muslim, early in the 8th century brought under subjection Balkh, Bokhara, Ferghana, and Kashgaria, and penetrated into China as far as the province of Kan-su. In the latter part of the 8th century Merv became obnoxious to Islam as the centre of heretical propaganda preached by Mokannah (Haschem ben Hakem), the "veiled prophet of Khorasan," who claimed to be the incarnation of the Deity. In 874 Arab rule in Central Asia came to an end. During their dominion Merv, like Samarkand and Bokhara, became one of the great schools of science, and the celebrated historian Yakut studied in its libraries. About 1037 the Seljukian Turks crossed the Oxus from the north and raised Toghrul Beg, grandson of Seljuk, to the throne of Persia, founding the Seljukian dynasty, with its capital at Nishapur. A younger brother of Toghrul, Daoud, took possession of Merv and Herat. Toghrul was succeeded by the renowned Alp Arslan (the great lion), whose sway was so vast that, according to tradition, no fewer than twelve hundred kings, princes, and sons of kings and princes did homage before his throne. Alp Arslan was buried at Merv. It was about this time that Merv reached the zenith of her glory. During the reign of Sultan Sanjar of the same house, towards the middle of the 11th century, Merv was overrun by the Turcomans of Ghúz, and the country was reduced to a state of misery and desolation. These Turcomans, the ancestors of the present tribes of Turcomania, were probably introduced into the country by the Seljukian Turks as military colonists. They formed the van of their armies, and rendered efficient service so long as the dynasty lasted, and afterwards took part in the wars of Tamerlane.

In 1221 Merv opened its gates to Toulai, son of Jenghiz, khan of the Mongols, on which occasion the inhabitants, to the number of 700,000, are said to have been butchered. From this time forward Merv, which had been the chief city of Khorasan, and was popularly supposed to contain a million inhabitants, commenced to languish in obscurity. In the early part of the 14th century Merv was again the seat of a Christian archbishopric of the Eastern Church. On the death of the grandson of Jenghiz Khan Merv became included in the possessions of Toghluk Timur Khan (Tamerlane), in 1380. In 1505 the decayed city was occupied by the Uzbeks, who five years later were expelled by Ismail Khan, the founder of the Suffavean dynasty of Persia. Merv thenceforward remained in the hands of Persia until 1787, when it was attacked and captured by the emir of Bokhara. Seven years later the Bokharians razed the city to the ground, broke down the dams, and converted the district into a waste. About 1790 the Sarik Turcomans pitched their tents there. When Sir Alexander Burnes traversed the country in 1832, the Khivans were the rulers of Merv, the nomad population being subject to them. About this time the Tekke Turcomans, then living at Orazkala on the Heri-rud, were forced to migrate northward in consequence of the pressure from behind of the Persians. The Khivans contested the advance of the Tekkes, but ultimately, about the year 1856, the latter became the sovereign power in the country, and have ever since resisted all attempts at reconquest.

Authorities.—Besides the standard travels of Wolff, Ferrier, Vambery, Burnes, Abbott, Mouravieff, and others, the following works and papers of more recent date may be consulted with advantage:—Sir H. Rawlinson's *England and Russia in the East*; O'Donovan's correspondence with the *Daily News*, 1880–81; O'Donovan's "Merv," *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc.*; Col. Stewart's "Country of the Tekke Turcomans," *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc.*, with excellent map; "The New Russo-Persian Frontier, 1881," *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc.*; Girard de Rialle, *Mémoire sur l'Asie Centrale*; Sir H. Rawlinson, "Road to Merv," *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc.*; Col. Baker's *Clouds in the East*; Captain Napier's "Reports," *Jour. Roy. Geog. Soc.*; Hutton's *Central Asia*; Marvin's *Merv*; Col Potto's *Steppe Campaigns*; Sir Charles MacGregor's *Journey through Khorassan*; Boulger's *England and Russia in Central Asia*; Captain Butler's *Communications to the Public Press*; Lessar's "Journeys," *Proc. Roy. Geog. Soc.*; O'Donovan's *Merv Oasis*; Papers on the Turcomans, &c., by Col. Petrusevitch, *Proc. Imp. Russ. Geog. Soc.*, Caucasus section; Col. Grodekoff's *Journey from Tashkend to Persia*, 1880; Captain Kuropatkin's *Turcomania*, 1880; Col. Veniukoff's *Progress of Russia in Central Asia*, 1877, and other papers by the same author; Col. Kostenko's "Turkestan," *Jour. R. U. S. Instn.*; Schuyler's *Turkistan*; correspondence on Central Asia presented to parliament, &c. (F. C. H. C.)

MÉRYON, Charles (1821–1868). The name of Méryon is associated with that spirited revival of etching in France which took place in the middle of the 19th century,—say from 1850 to 1865,—but it is rather by the individuality of his own achievements, and the strength of his artistic nature, than by the influence he exercised that Méryon best deserves fame. No doubt his work encouraged others to employ the same medium of expression, and so great was his own perfection of *technique* that he may well have been made a model; but, after all, the medium he selected, and in which he excelled, was but the accident of his art; he was driven to it in part by stress of circumstances—by colour blindness; and, even with colour blindness, his extraordinary certainty of hand and his delicate perception of light, aided by his potent imagination, would have made him a great draughtsman not alone upon the copper.

Charles Méryon was born in Paris in 1821. His father was an English physician, his mother a French dancer. It was to his mother's care that Méryon's childhood was confided. She was supplied with money, and she gave the boy passionate affection, if not a wise training. But she died when he was still very young, and Méryon in due time entered the French navy, and in the corvette "Le Rhin" made the voyage round the world. He was already a draughtsman, for on the coast of New Zealand he made pencil drawings which he was able to employ, years afterwards, as studies for etchings of the landscape of those regions. The artistic instinct developed, and, while he was yet a lieutenant, Méryon left the navy. Finding that he was colour-blind, Méryon determined to devote himself to etching. He entered the work-room of one Bléry, from whom he learnt something of technical matters, and to whom he always remained grateful. Méryon was by this time poor. It is said that he might have had assistance from his kindred, but he was too proud to ask it. And thus he was reduced to the need of executing for the sake of daily bread much work that was wholly mechanical and irksome. Resolutely, though unwillingly, he became the hack of his art, doing frequently, from the day when he was first a master of it to the day when insanity disabled him, many dull commissions which paid ill, but paid better than his original works. Among learner's work, done for his own advantage, are to be counted some studies after the

Dutch etchers such as Zeeman and Adrian van de Velde. Having proved himself a surprising copyist, he proceeded to labour of his own, and began that series of etchings which are the greatest embodiments of his greatest conceptions—the series called "Eaux-fortes sur Paris." These plates, executed from 1850 to 1854, are never to be met with as a set; they were never expressly published as a set. But they none the less constituted in Méryon's mind an harmonious series. For him their likenesses and their contrasts were alike studied; they had a beginning and an end; and their differences were lost in their unity.

Besides the twenty-two etchings "sur Paris" characterized below, Méryon did seventy-two etchings of one sort and another,—ninety-four in all being catalogued in Wedmore's *Méryon and Méryon's Paris*; but these include the works of his apprenticeship and of his decline, adroit copies in which his best success was in the sinking of his own individuality, and dull and worthless portraits chiefly of forgotten celebrities. Yet among the seventy-two prints outside his professed series there are at least a dozen that will aid his fame. Three or four beautiful etchings of Paris do not belong to the series at all. Two or three etchings, again, are devoted to the illustration of Bourges, a city in which the old wooden houses were as attractive to him for their own sakes as were the stone-built monuments of Paris. But generally it was when Paris engaged him that he succeeded the most. He would have done more work, however,—though he could hardly have done better work,—if the material difficulties of his life had not pressed upon him and shortened his days. He was a bachelor, unhappy in love, and yet, it is related, almost as constantly occupied with love as with work. The depth of his imagination and the surprising mastery which he achieved almost from the beginning in the technicalities of his craft were appreciated only by a few artists, critics, and connoisseurs, and he could not sell his etchings, or could sell them only for about 10d. a piece. The fact that his own original work was of incalculably greater value than his best copies of his most celebrated forerunners had not yet impressed itself upon anybody. Disappointment told upon him, and, frugal as was his way of life, poverty must have told on him. He became subject to hallucinations. Enemies, he said, waited for him at the corners of the streets; his few friends robbed him or owed him that which they would never pay. A very few years after the completion of his Paris series, he was lodged in the madhouse of Charenton. Its order and care restored him for a while to health, and he came out and did a little more work, but at bottom he was exhausted. In 1867 he returned to his asylum, and died there in 1868. In the middle years of his life, just before he was placed under confinement, he was much associated with Bracquemond and with Flameng,—skilled practitioners of etching, while he was himself an undeniable genius,—and the best of the portraits we have of him is that one by Bracquemond under which the sitter wrote that it represented "the sombre Méryon with the grotesque visage." And it did.

There are twenty-two pieces in the Eaux-fortes sur Paris. Some of them are insignificant. That is because ten out of the twenty-two were destined as headpiece, tailpiece, or running commentary on some more important plate. But each has its value, and certain of the smaller pieces throw great light on the aim of the entire set. Thus, one little plate—not a picture at all—is devoted to the record of verses made by Méryon, the purpose of which is to lament the life of Paris. The misery and poverty of the town Méryon had to illustrate, as well as its splendour. The art of Méryon is completely misconceived when his etchings are spoken of as views of Paris. They are often "views," but they are so just so far as is compatible with their being likewise the visions of a poet and the compositions of an artist. It was an epic of Paris that Méryon determined to make, coloured strongly by his personal sentiment, and affected here and there by the occurrences of the moment,—in more than one case, for instance, he hurried with particular affection to etch his impression of some old-world building which was on the point of destruction. Nearly every etching in the series is an instance of technical skill, but even the technical skill is exercised most happily in those etchings which have the advantage of impressive subjects, and which the collector willingly cherishes for their mysterious suggestiveness or for their pure beauty. Of these, the Abside de Notre Dame is the general favourite; it is commonly held to be Méryon's masterpiece. Light and shade play wonderfully over the great fabric of the church, seen over the spaces of the river. As a draughtsman of architecture, Méryon was complete; his sympathy with its various styles was broad, and his work on its various styles unbiassed and of equal perfection—a point in which it is curious to contrast him with Turner, who, in drawing Gothic, often drew it with want of appreciation. It is evident that architecture must enter largely into any representation of a city, however much such representation may be a vision, and however little a chronicle. Besides, the architectural portion even of Méryon's labour is but indirectly imaginative; to the imagination he has given freer play in his dealings with the figure, whether the people of the street or of the river or the people who, when he is most frankly or even wildly symbolical, crowd the sky. Generally speaking, his figures are, as regards draughtsmanship, "landscape-painter's figures." They are drawn more with an eye to grace than to correctness. But they are not "landscape-painter's figures" at all when what we are concerned with is not the method of their representation but the purpose of their introduction. They are seen then to be in exceptional accord with the sentiment of the scene. Sometimes, as in the case of La Morgue, it is they who tell the story of the picture. Sometimes, as in the case of La Rue des Mauvais Garçons,—with the two passing women bent together in secret converse,—they at least suggest it. And sometimes, as in L'Arche du Pont Notre Dame, it is their expressive gesture and eager action that give vitality and animation to the scene. Dealing perfectly with architecture, and perfectly, as far as concerned his peculiar purpose, with humanity in his art, Méryon was little called upon by the character of his subjects to deal with Nature. He drew trees but badly, never representing foliage happily, either in detail or in mass. But to render the characteristics of the city, it was necessary that he should know how to pourtray a certain kind of water—river-water, mostly sluggish—and a certain kind of sky—the grey obscured and lower sky that broods over a world of roof and chimney. This water and this sky Méryon is thoroughly master of; he notes with observant affection their changes in all lights.

Méryon's excellent draughtmanship, and his keen appreciation of light, shade, and tone, were, of course, helps to his becoming a great etcher. But a living authority, himself an eminent etcher, and admiring Méryon thoroughly, has called Méryon by preference a great original engraver,—so little of Méryon's work accords with Mr Haden's view of etching. Méryon was anything but a brilliant sketcher; and, if an artist's success in etching is to be gauged chiefly by the rapidity with which he records an impression, Méryon's success was not great. There can be no doubt that his work was laborious and deliberate, instead of swift and impulsive, and that of some other virtues of the etcher—"selection" and "abstraction" as Mr Hamerton has defined them—he shows small trace. But a genius like Méryon is a law unto himself, or rather in his practice of his art he makes the laws by which that art and he are to be judged. He was a great etcher, and by his most elaborate labour he seemed somehow to ensure the more completely for his picture that virtue of unity of impression which, it may well be admitted, oftener belongs to rapid than to deliberate work. In Méryon's etchings the hand-work never seems to be in arrear of the thought. As long as the hand-work must continue, the thought and passion are retained. Méryon knows the secrets of his craft as well as did the older masters of it; but he turns them to his own purposes. He is unexcelled in strength and in precision, nor is he often rivalled in delicacy. These qualities, and others more distinctly technical, which it would take too long to insist on here, students find in his etchings. But the incommunicable charm of Méryon's prints and their lasting fascination are due to the fact that, behind all technical qualities, and as their very source and spring, there lies the potent imagination of the artist, poetical and vivid, directing him what to see in his subject, and how to see it. (F. WE.)

MESCHERYAKS, or Meschers, a people inhabiting eastern Russia. Nestor regarded them as Finns, and even now part of the Mordvinians (of Finnish origin) call themselves Meschers. Klaproth, on the other hand, supposed they were a mixture of Finns and Turks, and the Hungarian traveller Reguli discovered that the Tartarized Meschers of the Obi closely resembled Hungarians. They formerly occupied the basin of the Oka (where the town Meschersk, now Meschovsk, has maintained their name) and of the Surâ, extending north-east to the Volga. After the conquest of the Kazan empire by Russia, part of

them migrated north-eastwards to the basins of the Kama and Byelaya, and thus the Meschers divided into two branches. The western branch became Russified, so that the Mescheryaks of the governments of Penza, Saratoff, Ryazan, and Vladimir have adopted the customs, language, and religion of the conquering race; but their ethnographical characteristics can be easily distinguished in the Russian population of the governments of Penza and Tamboff. The eastern branch has taken on the customs, language, and religion of Bashkirs, with whom their fusion is still more complete. They can be distinguished from their neighbours only by their more peaceful character. This Bashkir-Mescheryak branch was estimated by Rittich in 1875 to number 138,000. They make 6 per cent. of the population of the government of Upa, and 22 per cent. in the district of Birsk. The number of the western Mescheryaks is unknown, and could hardly be estimated on account of their mixture with Russians. It is only in the government of Penza that they have maintained their national features; there they make 3 per cent. of the population.

MESCHOVSK, a district town of Russia, in the government of Kaluga, 45 miles to the south-west of the capital of the province. It is an old town supposed to date from the 13th century, and it is often mentioned in Russian annals under the names of Mezetsk, Mezechevsk, or Meschorsk. About the end of the 14th century it was embraced in Lithuania, and it was ceded to the Moscow "great principality" in 1494. It was often pillaged by Tartars in the 16th century, and during the great disturbances of 1610 all its inhabitants were killed by the Zaporoghi Cossacks, and the fort was taken by Poles, who returned it to Russia only after the treaty of Deulin. The country round Meschovsk is not fertile; but, from its position on old established routes to the south, the town has become a centre of considerable trade. Its annual fair, which takes place on the grounds of the very old Petrovsk monastery, is important to the surrounding districts for the export sale of horses, grain, hemp, hempseed oil, and coarse linen, and for the import trade in cottons, woollens, and earthen and glass wares, the whole turn-over reaching about £100,000. Population, 7400.

MESHED (properly Mesh-hed, *i.e.*, "place of martyrdom," "shrine"), a city of northern Persia, capital of Khorásán, 472 miles east of Tehrán, 201 miles north-west of Herat, 36° 17′ 40″ N., 52° 35′ 29″ E., lies on a plain watered by the Keshaf-rúd, a tributary of the Heri-rúd, and is surrounded by mud walls 4 miles in circumference, with a dry ditch 40 feet deep at some points, which could be flooded from the neighbouring reservoir and watercourses. Within this enclosure is a strong citadel, with good walls 25 feet high, residence of the prince governor of Khorásán. There are five gates, from one of which, the Bala Khíabán, the Khíabán main street runs right through the city, forming a fine boulevard planted with plane and mulberry trees, and with a stream of dirty water running down its whole length. In the centre is an open parallelogram 160 yards by 75, encircled by double-storied cloisters, and pierced on the long side by a high arched porch leading directly to the great mosque, whose gilded dome rises above the shrine of the famous Imám Rizá.[1] The marble tomb of the saint, which is the most venerated spot in the whole of Persia, and yearly visited by from 80,000 to 100,000 pilgrims, is surrounded by a silver railing, and approached by a flight of inlaid marble steps. Eastwick, the only European before O'Donovan who penetrated as far as the parallelogram, describes the mosque as large enough to contain three thousand people. It is flanked by two gilded minarets, one of which, 120 feet high, is extremely beautiful, with an exquisitely carved capital, built by Sháh Abbás. The façade is entirely covered with blue and white enamelled tiles. To the mosque are attached as many as two thousand attendants and retainers of all sorts, including no less than five hundred mollahs. Beyond the dome is Gauhar Sháh's handsome mosque, surmounted by an immense blue dome, and also flanked by two minarets. In the main street is a public kitchen supported by the enormous revenues of the shrine, where eight hundred devotees are daily supplied with food gratuitously. The only other notable buildings in the place are some colleges and twenty-two caravanserais, one of which is of great size. Meshed does a considerable local and transit trade to the yearly value of about 600,000 tománs, and its bazaars are always well stocked with silks, velvets, felts, cottons, shawls, carpets, lacquer work, lambskins, hardware, glass, china, and other goods from South Persia, India, Turkestan, and Russia. The European trade is now entirely controlled by Russia, and European manufactured articles are mostly all from that country. The chief manufactures are silk, satin, velvet, and checked-cotton fabrics, carpets, shawls, noted sword blades, shagreen, and turquois jewellery. Within the enclosures are extensive cemeteries far exceeding the local requirements, large numbers of the faithful being brought from all parts of the Shí'a world to be buried in the vicinity of Rizá's shrine under the belief that their eternal salvation is thereby ensured.

Some 10 miles west of Meshed is a powder factory, formerly under Colonel Dolmage, where powder of excellent quality is produced. The district, although fertile, does not produce sufficient for the inhabitants, so that much grain has to be imported from Kurdistán and Nishápúr. The climate is very severe in winter, with much snow; in summer it is less sultry than might be expected, the temperature ranging from 76° F. to 90° or 92° F., and in exceptional years 94° to 98° F. The population is variously estimated at from 45,000 (Connolly) and 60,000 (Ferrier) to 80,000 and 100,000 (Eastwick). The settled residents, exclusive of pilgrims and foreign traders, are estimated by O'Donovan at 50,000.

The main caravan routes from Khiva, Bokhara, Samarkand, and Herat converge at Meshed, whence lines of traffic radiate to Kúchan for the Atrek valley and the Caspian, to Nishápúr and Bostam for Tehrán, to Tabas for Isfahán, to Khaf for Sístán and Kirmán. It thus occupies a position in north-eastern Persia analogous to that of Tabríz in the north-west.

MESHED-ALI, *i.e.*, the shrine of the "martyr" Ali, is a town of Asiatic Turkey, province of Baghdad, 50 miles south of Kerbela, close to the ruins of Kufa, and 2 miles west of the Hindíye branch of the Euphrates, the reputed burial-place of the caliph Ali.[2] It stands on the east scarp of the Syrian desert, and is enclosed by nearly square brick walls flanked by massive round towers dating from the time of the caliphs. Under the gilded dome of the great mosque, which occupies the centre of the town, is the shrine of Ali, which is held by the Shí'a as at least as holy as the Kaaba itself. Any Moslem buried within sight of the dome being certain of salvation, large numbers of bodies are yearly sent from all parts for interment here. Besides the mosque with its richly decorated façade, the only noteworthy building is a good bazaar supplied from Baghdad and Basra. The town itself, which Lady Anne

[1] 'Alí Rizá (or el-Ridá), the eighth imám of the Shí'a, is the 'Alí ibn Músá from whom the party of Alides had such hopes under the caliphate of Mamún (see MOHAMMEDANISM). He died at Tús, 818 A.D., and was buried by Mamún's orders in the vicinity of that town beside the grave of Hárún el-Rashíd. To the Alides he was a martyr, being believed to have been poisoned by the caliph. Ibn Batúta, who describes both shrines (iii. 77 *sq.*), tells how the pious visitors to the shrine of 'Alí ibn Músá used to spurn with their feet the tomb of Rashíd. In his time a considerable town had been formed around the shrine under the name of Meshhed el-Ridá and ultimately the new town eclipsed the older city of Tus.

[2] Whether the place really contains the grave of Ali was long disputed, and the story given in defence of its claims is doubtless apocryphal. The dome was built under the Abbasids, and the resting-place of the caliph unknown or concealed under the Omayyads (Ibn Haukal, p. 163).

Blunt describes as "an ideal Eastern city, standing in an absolute desert, and bare of all surroundings but its tombs," consists of narrow gloomy streets lined by houses closely packed together. The locality is properly named Najaf, and gives its name to the neighbouring lake, a large depression filled by an eruption of the river, and ranging from 6 to 20 feet in depth. The accumulated treasures of the shrine were carried off by the Wahhábites when they captured this place early in the present century. The population is estimated at 7000, including several Indian Mohammedans under the protection of the British resident at Baghdad.

The aspect of the shrine in the 14th century is described by Ibn Batúta, i. 414 *sq.* A plan of the town and description of its splendour before the Wahhábites pillaged it is given by Niebuhr. See also Ibn Jubair, p. 214; P. Teixeira, *Itin.*, cap. iv.

MESHED HOSEIN, properly MESHHED HOSEIN. See KERBELA, vol. xiv. p. 48.

MESMER, MESMERISM. See vol. xv. p. 277.

MESOPOTAMIA, the "country between the rivers," is a purely geographical expression, the countries which it comprehends never having formed a self-contained political unity.[1] It was first introduced by the Greeks at or after the time of Alexander, but probably had its origin in the earlier Aramæan name *běth nahrīn* (the country between the rivers), to which again corresponds the Biblical *Aram Naharayim*.[2] As early as 700 B.C. "the country of two rivers" is mentioned on the Egyptian monuments under the name Naharina, but no such designation appears in the cuneiform inscriptions (though the territory formed part of the Assyrian as it afterwards did of the Persian empire). The most settled period in the history of Mesopotamia was probably under Persian-Greek rule. Xenophon applies the name Syria to the extremely fertile district which he traversed after having crossed the Euphrates at Thapsacus. The country beyond the Araxes (Chaboras ?) he calls Arabia, —a desert region in which his army had to suffer great hardships until it reached the "gates of Arabia." Even in later times Mesopotamia was included under the name Assyria, or was reckoned part of Babylonia.

These statements of Xenophon already indicate a demarcation of the territory afterwards called Mesopotamia, as well as its division into two sections. The fertile portion, inhabited by agricultural Aramæans, stretched from the Euphrates to the Chaboras; the desert portion, the home of wandering tribes, extended to the Tigris. It would be rash, however, to conclude from this that Mesopotamia designated the whole territory between the Euphrates and Tigris; indeed it is possible that *Aram Naharayim*, the Aram of the country of the two rivers, originally meant only the main portion of the fertile country inhabited by Syrians. In this case the two boundary rivers must have been, not the Euphrates and the Tigris, but the Euphrates and the Chaboras. After the final occupation of the country by the Romans (156 A.D.), the political province of Mesopotamia was practically confined to this more limited district. Though in ordinary usage the Euphrates and Tigris are considered as the two rivers which bound Mesopotamia, the one bank of the river cannot be geographically separated from the other, and consequently narrow strips of country on the right bank of the Euphrates and on the left bank of the Tigris must be reckoned to the country "between" the rivers. On the other hand, the country between the sources of the Euphrates and the Tigris has from early times been reckoned not to Mesopotamia but to Armenia. In this direction the Masius range forms the proper boundary, and it is only on rare occasions that theoretical geographers extend the name Mesopotamia over the more northern districts, Sophene, &c. Purely theoretical too, and not to be approved, is the extension of the definition so as to include the land of Babylonia ('Irák 'Arabi), that is, the country as far south as the confluence of the Euphrates and Tigris, or even as far as their embouchure in the Persian Gulf.

From what has been said it appears that Mesopotamia reaches its northern limits at the points where the EUPHRATES (*q.v.*) and the Tigris break through the mountain range and enter the lowlands. In the case of the Euphrates this takes place at Sumeisát (Samosata), in that of the Tigris near Jezíret ibn 'Omar (Bezabdá) and Mosul (Nineveh). Consequently the irregular northern boundaries are marked by the lowland limits of those spurs of the Taurus mountains known in antiquity as Mons Masius and now as Karaje Dágh and Túr 'Abdín. Towards the south the ancient boundary was the so-called Median Wall, which, near Pirux Shapur, not much to the south of Hít (the ancient Is), crossed from the Euphrates in the direction of Kadisiya (Opis) to the Tigris. There the two rivers approach each other, to diverge again lower down. At the same place begins the network of canals connecting the two rivers which rendered the country of Babylonia one of the richest in the world; there too, in a geological sense, the higher portion of the plain, consisting of strata of gypsum and marl, comes to an end; there at one time ran the line of the sea-coast; and there begin those alluvial formations with which the mighty rivers in the course of long ages have filled up this depressed area. Mesopotamia thus forms a triangle lying in the north-west and south-east direction, with its long sides towards the north and south-west. It extends from 37° 30′ to about 33° N. lat. and from 38° to 46° E. long., and has an area of some 55,200 square miles. The points at which the rivers issue from among the mountains have an absolute altitude of between 1000 and 1150 feet, and the plain sinks rapidly towards the southern extremity of Mesopotamia, where it is not more than about 165 feet above the sea. As a whole the entire country consists of a single open stretch, save that in the north there are some branches of the Taurus—the Nimrúd Dágh near Orfá, the long limestone range of 'Abd-el 'Azíz, running north-north-west, and farther to the east the Sinjar range, also of limestone, 7 miles broad and 50 miles long, running north-north-east. Between these two ranges—near the isolated basaltic hill of Tell Kókab (Hill of Stars —runs the defile by which the waters of the Chaboras, swollen by the Jaghjagha and other affluents from the Masius, find their way into the heart of Mesopotamia. The Khábúr proper, the ancient Chaboras, which rises in the three-hundred copious fountains of Rás-'ain (the ancient Rhesæna), and ultimately falls into the Euphrates near Karkísiya (Circesium), forms the boundary between the two, or more correctly the three, great divisions of Mesopotamia. These divisions are (1) the northern country to the west of the Khábúr, (2) the northern country to the east, and (3) the steppe-land. In the country to the north-west of the Khábúr we must probably, as already mentioned, recognize the true ancient *Aram Naharayim*. Under the dominion of the Seleucids it bore the name of Osrhoene, or better Orrhoene, and was for a time the seat of a special dynasty which at a later date at any rate was Arabian (Abgar). The capital of this kingdom was Orfa (Roha), the Edessa of the Greeks and Romans, the Orrhoi of the Syrians; it was at a later date a Roman colony, and bore also the name of Justinopolis. This once flourishing city lies on the small river Daisan (the ancient Scirtus). South of Edessa lie

[1] Μεσοποταμία, more exactly ἡ μέση τῶν ποταμῶν, scil. χώρα or Συρία.

[2] In the more recent parts of Genesis Padan Aram takes the place of Aram Naharayim. But this perhaps is the name of a smaller district in the neighbourhood of Harran.