



A Street in Bagdad

and some sand grouse swept the ground before us. This was the only animal life which met our view in the whole distance of some sixty miles from Bagdad to Babylon. After we had gone half the journey we could mark the vestiges of a former civilization in rows of "tells" or mounds which dotted the desert. Some few of these showed signs of having been excavated, but the majority looked the same as when they had been constructed some thousands of years ago. Far off in the distance almost imperceptible to the naked eye, there loomed on the horizon what appeared to be a grove of trees, and on our right, growing up seemingly out of the arid desert there appeared one solitary palm "unwoo'd of Summer wind". On nearer view the grove turned out to be a palm plantation on the banks of the Euphrates, and we began to realize that in a few minutes, we would be amid the ruins of one of the most famous cities of the past.

At half-past ten we alighted from the train right in the midst of neglected watercourses and a perfect sea of mounds and ruins. I stood dazed, hardly able to speak or to move. Here

had been the culmination of an Empire's dream, and here its downfall. In the palace whose ruins lay almost at our feet Nebuchadnezzar had lived, and Alexander the Great had died. In this same palace, too, was the banqueting hall where Belshazzar made his feast, and all round about were memorials of civilizations long since passed into oblivion. It seemed as though the flood-gates of history had suddenly been opened, and through them there were passing in review, the hosts of Assyria and of Babylonia, the Army of Cyrus, the troops of Alexander the Great, and all the men of civilization past and gone. I fell into a reverie in which the past floated before my eyes, but I awoke to see in some wandering Arabs the rise of Islam, and, in our own party, the representatives of a power soon to be a potent factor in the history of the East.

As I stood there I felt creeping over me something of the spirit which haunted that charming writer, Miss Gertrude Lowthian Bell, when in similar surroundings she gave expression to her feelings in these words: