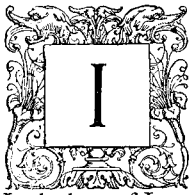


Journeying to Babylon

BY WILLIAM WARFIELD



It was not that we had had enough of Bagdad. The fascination of that romantic city never palled. The least spoiled city in Turkey, the soul not only of Irak, but of Iran and Arabia, we found it ever alive with romance, kaleidoscopic with strange sights, teeming with men of all descriptions, desert-dwellers and city-dwellers, mountaineers and plainsmen. But we wished to exchange these medieval scenes for a glimpse into the shimmering dawn of history, bright with the hopes of surging peoples, resonant with strange tongues and fresh with the dew of unquestioned tradition. It was for this that we decided to leave the noisy bazaars to cross the desert silences and sit down by the waters of Babylon.

It seemed prosaic to make this journey in a post-carriage. We sent our servant with the requisite number of Turkish liras to procure a ticket and such oranges and dates and other things as we should require for sustenance on the road. The ticket began to dispel our illusions about the prosaic character of the ride. It was a slip of paper four inches square, bearing at the top a rough wood-cut representing an old-fashioned stage-coach; below it was filled in with flowing Arabic characters setting forth our names, our destination, and the date. Our last illusion was dispelled when we were confronted at the consulate with a trim, blue-uniformed zaptieh, his rifle slung over his shoulder, his hand raised to salute, who was to accompany us to guard us from the perils of the road.

The carriages leave bright and early so as not to reach their destination after dark, when robbers are abroad. It was not yet four o'clock when we arose and put on the warmest clothes we had. In the courtyard a flickering lantern cast fantastic shadows on the yellow-brick walls. Above, we caught a glimpse of

sharply glittering stars. A Kurdish coolie was produced from somewhere, and loaded with kit-bag and tiffin-basket. Mustafa, the cook's boy, seized the lantern and led us through the outer courtyard toward the street. Yusef, the porter, had to be aroused to unlock the heavy door and let us out. Not content with this service, he snatched up his lantern and set out to accompany us. But Mustafa had no intention of dividing his bakshish with a porter. A shrill discussion ensued in which our servant joined, and, worsted, Yusef returned to his blankets in the niche within the door.

That was a weird walk through the deserted streets. At first the starlight revealed the scene beyond the uncertain flashes from the swinging lantern. Soon projecting upper stories shut out all but a narrow strip of sky. The lantern light splashed on massive doors and barred windows. We entered the bazaar. The vaulted roof shut out the sky; the darkness was oppressive. Our voices echoed down the empty passage as in a tomb. A dog, roused by our footsteps, leaped up with a shrill bark and faced us, his hair bristling, his teeth showing white against the backward-curved lips. The light flashed from the eyes of a group of his fellows; some rose, barking fiercely; others slunk away from the light. The alarm spread, and in a moment the whole street was filled with a turmoil of barking. All the dogs in the neighborhood, wakened by the noise, joined in, half in anger, half in fear. Rays of light were reflected far ahead from pairs of eyes. Stark forms with bristling backs and gleaming teeth backed against the wall as we passed. If any stood in our way he was quickly put to rout by Mustafa's cane. As we passed they quieted down; we turned into other streets, and all was silent again. Only occasionally a sinewy brute leaped to his feet, or a pair of wide eyes glowed at us from the edge of the way.

As we made our last turn before reaching the bridge, a gleam of light flashed as from metal, we heard the click of spurs, and two officers of the watch passed with a solemn greeting. A little group of coolies, slouching, deep-chested, trotted by without turning their heads. We stepped on the rickety bridge of boats, following the lantern carefully so as not to step through some hole in the planking. The Tigris swirled and gurgled beneath us; the starlight flashed on the water down-stream; before us yawned blackly the entrance to the bazaars of west Bagdad.

Into this black hold we plunged and were greeted almost instantly by a furious crowd of white-fanged curs through which we made our way only after vigorous use had been made of Mustafa's cane. A couple of donkeys laden with brushwood, followed by a cursing hag, brushed by. The lantern light revealed a huddled coolie asleep on a pile of rubbish. The rickety roof of poles lay like a gridiron against the sky. Then we left the bazaars behind and found ourselves among the khans whither the caravans come. The air was full of the smell of stables and the musty odor of camels. A group of laden mules were standing before an arched doorway. In the darkness we heard the creak and thud followed by stamping which means a load has been lifted upon the saddle. We cringed against a wall to let pass a caravan of shouldering, jostling camels. A curious brute thrust his ugly, scowling countenance into the lantern light, blinking stupidly into our faces. "Daughter of wickedness! Mother of asses!" shrilled a voice through the night. The camels passed on. The air was sharp with the chill that comes before the dawn. The stars were growing dull. So we came at last to the khan from which the *arabanas*, the post-carriages, start.

The bustle of departure over, we banged away in our narrow rattletrap of a stage-coach, collars turned up, hands stuffed in pockets, shivering in the still cold of the winter morning. We reared over the high banks of irrigating ditches, bumped against desolate graves, and entered upon the flat, brown clay desert. Behind us the sun rose over the minarets and domes of the city. The brill-

iant sky was reflected in a marsh left by last year's floods. The chains jingled merrily as we rattled on. A telegraph-line lay on our right, now near, now far, as the track we followed capriciously. Around us stretched the desert.

At first we found it rather lonely, this vast, flat stretch of sun-baked clay. We overtook a few little groups of laden donkeys, and the caravan of camels that had passed us in the streets, but we met only a knot of black-clad women, each staggering beneath an enormous load of brushwood, the bitter, prickly camel-thorn, sole product of the unirrigated desert.

But as the sun rose higher, and the dry soil gave back its heat, and the mirage began to appear, first on the horizon, then nearer, like a flood of crystal water, we began to encounter those who went toward Bagdad from beyond the Euphrates. We passed a ruined castle and climbed clumsily over the mound that marks an old canal. There before us was a throng of other wayfarers, Persian pilgrims returning from a visit to the shrines of Kerbela. Strong, bearded men strode sturdily along beside heavily laden mules or rode sideways on tiny donkeys. Women and children swayed back and forth in a sort of cradle on the backs of animals or were hidden away in curtained boxes slung on each side of a pack-saddle. The men showed the effects of weariness, for theirs had been a long journey. But they were dogged, and the leaders among them greeted us cheerfully enough. They formed a large body straggling for several furlongs along the desert track, simple folk who made their pilgrimage in toil and suffering, sacrificing wonted comforts and using the savings of years for the expenses of the road. They were town-dwellers from the shores of the Caspian or north-central Persia, unaccustomed to hardship. At home they had lived by cultivating a little garden or vineyard, or by doing a little quiet trading in the bazaars of their native town. The women had lived always in the jealously guarded secrecy of their apartments, rarely appearing on the street. And here they are setting out again to brave the perils of a road beset with hostile tribes, barred by lofty mountain-passes. Such is the

fanatical power of the religion which they profess. Not a few must perish by the road, some will lose their animals and have to leave their simple loads behind and trudge on destitute. "All is in the hands of Allah! Praise be to God!"

Behind the pilgrims strode a number of camels, marching in irregular groups, plodding along in awkward indifference. Somewhere in each group was a man or boy striding along with his staff across his shoulders or perched high up on the hump of one of the beasts. But the leaders of the caravan rode in stately dignity, each upon a tiny ass, before a group of forty or fifty towering, heavily laden camels. The donkeys pattered along on dainty feet, with drooping heads and swishing tails. The camels, swaying from side to side, swung their huge, padded feet in ungainly fashion, deliberately, as though pausing after each step. They made a picture of patient submission, for they seemed to have got it into their undulating heads that the donkey was to be followed, so follow him they did, albeit protestingly.

When we had passed the last group of these burden-bearers, spread out right and left on each side, grumbling at having to make way for us, when the last stragglers from the pilgrim caravan had given up their quest of alms and followed their brethren, this is the tale that was told us by Thomas ibn Shamu, our servant:

"Sahib! This matter happened to a sheik of the desert, a Bedouin, a dweller in tents, filthy, and a Moslem." Thomas was a Chaldean of Bagdad, and feared as much as he despised the dwellers in the desert.

"This man was about to die, and called his animals about him asking them to forgive what wrongs he had done them. His mare looked tearfully upon her master and said she had naught to forgive; she had had milk from the camels and water provided for her on long marches in the desert; why should the master ask her forgiveness?"

"The greyhound said he had always had sufficient water to drink and a warm place to sleep, so he would gladly forgive his master if he had had to go hungry at times and been tied up when he wished to roam abroad.

"The ass said, with pity in his voice, that he had been beaten and ill-fed and driven by women, but, as his master was dying, he would forgive all.

"Then came the camel, growling and groaning and gurgling in his throat. Glaring bitterly at his master, he said: 'You have made me go hungry and thirsty; you have sent children to strike me in the face when I was restless and wished to walk about; you have burdened me with an ill-made saddle that galled my back; you have made me carry for all that are in your tent. All these things I forgive, since you are dying. One thing I will not forgive—that is that you have made me walk behind a donkey.'"

Caravan after caravan we passed, more pilgrims and more camels; some we overtook and some we met. Strange effects were often caused by the mirage. A caravan went by. A lake appeared before them. They seemed to enter it and were reflected in it. The camels grew taller and thinner in the shimmering heat until, tremendously lengthened and utterly unstable, they disappeared in the distant haze. In another quarter the lake reflected a forest of palms, set with white buildings, giving an impression of comfortable shade. We drove on, the lake receded, dwindled; a band of pilgrims seemed to be walking in a marsh; then the mirage vanished away and we saw clearly. We were driving into a squalid village set by a dried-up irrigating canal. Upon a mound stood three drooping, dragged, dusty palms—all that was left of our lovely grove.

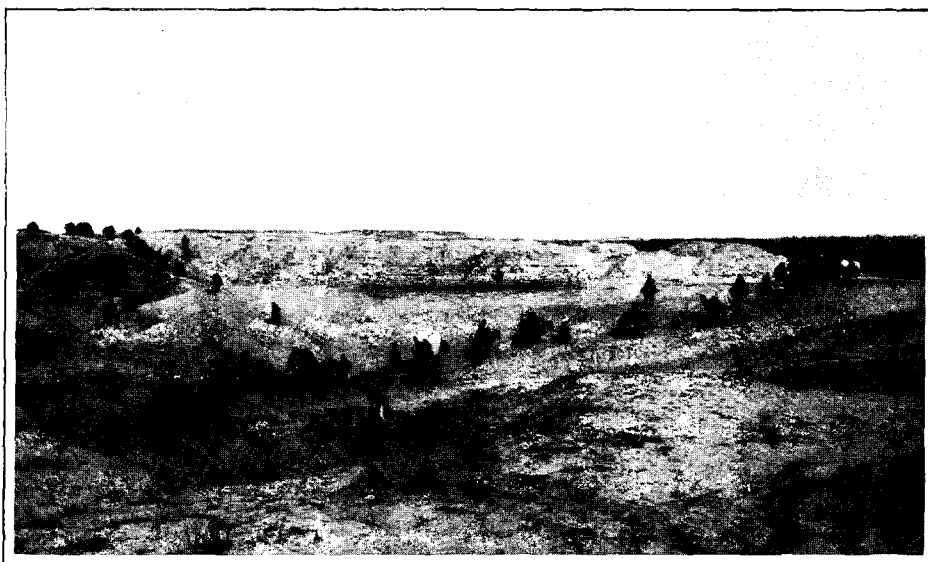
Here we stopped to change our mules. In the roadway before the khan sat a group of Arabs. A servant supplied them with little cups of tea from a rude samovar. We saluted them and, taking our places in the circle, we were served in turn. Some one in the dark doorway was thumping away on a drum. A boy came out of the khan beating a poor lame donkey covered with fly-infested sores. I turned to one of my neighbors:

"Is it not cruel for that boy to beat a lame ass in that way?"

"Effendim, it is the will of God!"

"But you do not allow horses or camels to be beaten thus."

"Effendim, the donkey is not like the



A CARAVAN OF PERSIAN PILGRIMS ON THE WAY TO THE SHRINES OF KERBELA

horse, nor yet is he like the camel. The reason is this: Upon a certain day the donkeys went before Allah and complained that they were grievously beaten by men so that life was a greater burden than they could bear. Then said Allah: 'I cannot make men cease from beating you. It is no sin, neither does it cause them any great loss. But I will help you. I will give you so thick a hide that however much you are beaten you shall not suffer.'

"So," said my informant, "it is of no consequence if men beat an ass. So thick a skin did Allah give him that after he dies men use it in the making of drums, and the donkey continues to be beaten after death."

Thump, thump, thump-thump! came the sound from the shadowed doorway.

Soon after leaving the village we overtook a throng of pilgrims trudging along on foot. They were the poorest of the poor, dwellers in reed huts from the great swamp. Yet they seemed the most cheerful of all the pilgrims. They wiled away the time with merry talk, flaunting their green and red banners overhead. The women were unveiled, and walked with bare feet beside their lords, carrying the few necessities of their culinary art. Old men greeted us

pleasantly. A mere slip of a girl with a baby in her arms cracked a joke at our expense, much to the amusement of her companions. Four or five hundred people, they were on this tramp of a thousand miles which they had undertaken to insure their future happiness.

Journeying for the same purpose was another caravan, that of a rich Persian family. The father, riding a handsome gray stallion, was in the lead, clad in somber black, his beard stained red with henna. His sons came behind with a group of armed servants all superbly mounted. Not a woman was in sight. They were hidden away in kejavahs, carefully curtained, carried two and two on the backs of mules. I wonder if ever these pale, cramped women in their stuffy boxes wished to exchange their lot for that of their slender, sad-eyed sisters who had tramped barefooted from the swamp?

That night we spent in the hospitable dwelling of an English engineer. He was engaged in placing a huge barrage across the channel of the Euphrates. Long ago, in the dim past, this land-between-the-rivers was intersected by a network of canals which made it the home for the dense population of Babylonian and Persian times. These water-

ways are marked to-day by long clay ridges, for so laden with silt are the rivers that canals are rapidly silted up and have to be dug out afresh each year. For some reason, or more likely for many reasons, these canals were abandoned one by one until now even Kerbela and Babylon have no running water except in flood-time. The barrage is a long series of arches each of which may be closed by a steel door. Its purpose is to hold back the river in the season of low water so that it will run freely into the canals to the threatened cities. In flood-times the gates will be opened so that the great mass of water which would carry a dam away may sweep by as though running under a bridge.

Four thousand years ago a civilization existed in this land which probably was old in the days of Noah. Somewhere in the buried past a prosperous race increased their prosperity by conducting the life-giving waters far and wide over the face of the land. They developed a tremendous culture, fostered literature, art, and science; their armies spread terror among their neighbors; the justice of their courts was unequaled; their wise men solved the problem of creation in a way that has come down to us to-day. But city after city has fallen as the

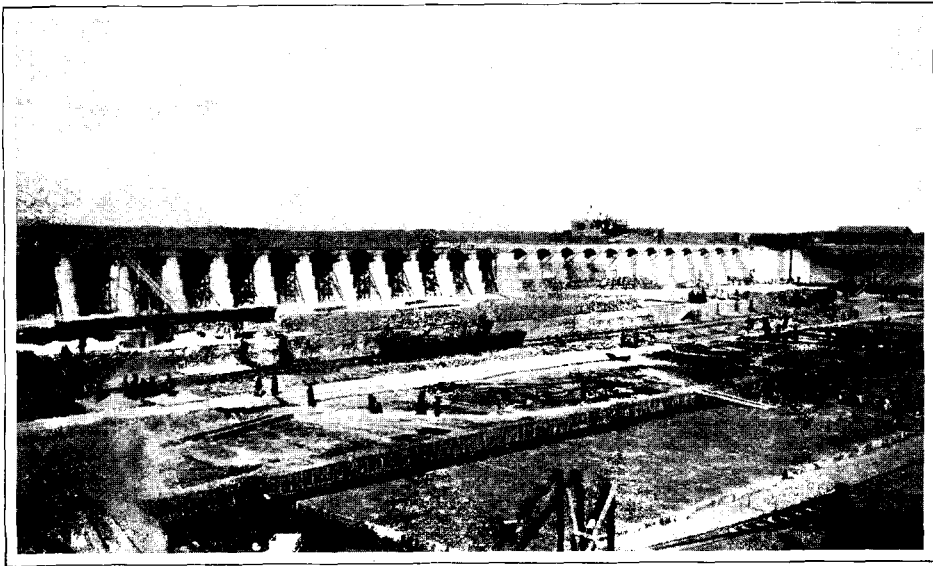
waters ceased to flow and their places have become sun-scorched mounds. Only the greatest of them remains, whose people have cried in despair: "Give us water! Without water we perish!" The cry has been heard by an alien government, and they in turn have called for help from a still more alien people. So this barrage was undertaken, and even as I write the waters are beginning to flow again toward Babylon.

We resumed our journey, carried like the pilgrims by the immemorial burden-bearer, the humble ass. Ridge after ridge of sun-baked clay we crossed, traversing the flat desert. Only one of the many large canals still contained any water, and that only in stagnant pools. Once we passed a group of mounds covered with shards marking the spot where once a village stood. Only one miserable group of huts was still inhabited. There was no one to greet us but dogs and a ragged child, for men, women, and children were out caring for the sheep or toiling to raise water from the deep wells to irrigate the palm gardens and the slender crops of grass.

As the day wore on the horizon became fringed with palms. There was no mirage, for the desert no longer gave back the slanting rays. My compan-



A TEA-SHOP BEFORE AN INN ON THE ROAD TO BABYLON



THE GREAT BARRAGE WHICH IS BEING BUILT ACROSS THE CHANNEL OF THE EUPHRATES

ion's donkey trotted ahead, neighing pleadingly to the leader of our caravan, who had been striding in advance all afternoon. Ceasing his weird desert melody, the man took from his bosom a handful of dates, which the pet received gratefully from his hand, immediately falling back with his companions. We found the palms separated into groves by half-ruined mud walls. A glossy, long-tailed magpie leaped from palm-stump to toppling wall and examined us critically. A pair of crested hoopoes made note of our coming, then disappeared among the branches of a blossoming pomegranate. The lower limb of the sun touched the horizon. The pious leader of our caravan, having instructed his underlings, stepped from the path, and, his face toward the setting sun, his hands upon his breast, began to repeat the evening prayer.

We rode on to a village strongly surrounded by a mud wall capped with thorns. We followed a flock of sheep through the gate and out again through the opposite wall. A winding path led down to the dry bed of the ancient canal where once ran a large part of the mighty Euphrates. The sheep were driven down, bleating, to a little hole where a slight moisture still remained. Behind

them the last glow of the setting sun clad the palms in splendor. A collapsed goufa lay in the sand of the water-course, beside it a bellem with seams gaping from dryness. The hand of drought lay upon all.

We found the dwelling of the German excavators among the palm-trees on the other bank. Our journey ended, we dismounted in the dusk while Ibrahim, the zaptieh, dined against the door. A blue-clad guard flung open the portal and we were admitted into the courtyard. A flock of geese waddled importantly to meet us; a ruffled turkey-cock complained truculently over an empty food-pan; a flock of pigeons rose, flapping to the roof. It seemed as though we had entered a Rhenish farm-yard, having left the sights and sounds of the desert far behind.

Sitting around the dinner-table that evening, we made the acquaintance of our new friends. They told us of their work and its results, of the discoveries they had made, and the difficulties they had encountered. The conversation turned upon personal safety and the value of human life in this land of quickly roused passions.

"With us," said Herr Wetzel, who sat at my right, "if you kill a man you

do not go to prison—you will not be killed. No; you must pay fifty liras to the family of the man; that is all.

"The son of one of our laborers killed a man. But, of course, a poor laborer had not fifty liras, so they had to settle it by special arrangement.

"The boy was a shepherd and had a field of grass to feed his flock. Another shepherd, who was too lazy to irrigate, came into his field one day and stole grass. But it happened that the other found it out and went and called his fellow a thieving sneak, an unprincipled wastrel, and other names of an undignified nature. This made the thief very angry, so he went into the field again and stole more grass. Once more the owner caught him. 'Again, son of Satan, child of Beelzebub! Surely I will send thee to join thy father!' and he shot him dead on the spot.

"Now his father was by the canal watering his donkey when some one of his neighbors came and said, 'Thy son hath slain his fellow.' Immediately the old man packed all his goods, his pots and his pans, upon his donkey and fled to the next village.

"But when the murdered man's family heard of the crime they rushed to the murderer's house and tore from it every last remaining article of value; then they returned to their own place. After this exhibition of rage their anger cooled somewhat and the murderer's father returned to his house, but without his donkey. He knew that now they would harm neither himself nor his son because of the fifty liras which was their due. Truly the Arab is too shrewd to kill the goose that lays the golden egg.

"After a seemingly interval the family of the murdered man came to demand their money. Over their narghilehs and cups of coffee the parties discussed this question.

"Surely our brave young man who feared neither wolves nor robbers, and carried a great silver knife in his belt, was worth four hundred liras!"

"Nay! Thy son was a rascal and not worth twenty liras. Moreover, he stole my donkey!"

"Now the relatives did not know that the old schemer had but carried off the donkey to the next village, so they said,

'But thy donkey, we know, was an ugly brute and old, and not worth two liras!'

"Nay; rather was he an animal of great beauty, pure white without a blemish, and scarcely five years of age. Surely he was of great value. But now that he has been stolen and knows me not, I will make a concession to you and value him at one hundred liras."

"So they bargained over the donkey and then over the man, and fixed upon his value less than that of the donkey at last. The father must pay thirty liras to the murdered man's family.

"But I am a poor man and have nothing. Wherewithal shall I pay?"

"Truly we know thou didst receive six mejids for certain dates, last November."

"But all this money is spent save two metaliks and a bad piaster, without which I cannot purchase salt for my son's sheep."

"So it was arranged that payment should be made in kind. More bargaining ensued over this. Finally the relatives agreed to accept two sheep, a young ass, and ten abas to be made by relatives of the murderer who dealt in such goods.

"When the time for payment came these goods were brought together and turned over to the relatives. The animals were passable and duly accepted. But as for the abas—they were scarcely big enough for a three-year-old child.

"This is not according to the bargain. We cannot wear such abas."

"Nay! but there was no word in the bargain requiring me to make abas for big men."

"So the relatives were outwitted and the neighbors said, 'What a clever man!'

"We have a neighbor who is a rich man and keeps fifty liras always at hand. So the villagers know his gardeners will shoot, and do not trespass in his garden in the date season, for no one likes to get killed."

As we were preparing to leave the table there was a rustling in the veranda without, then a sound of scuffling and a voice resembling that of the common or back-fence variety of cat. But as we left the room we saw that these were no common cats. Solemnly the aged, dignified, and very learned Herr Professor

assured us that they were Babylonian cats. Not one or two, but a score at least—black and tawny, striped and marbled, like ordinary cats, but each showing his royal race by his tail, which was laughably misshapen, crooked, and kinked like the tail of a bulldog. This motley crew swarmed over the Professor, who fed them with pieces broken from one of the coarse loaves of native unleavened bread which he had brought from the table for the purpose. They climbed to his shoulders, clung to his coat, scuffled and cuffed one another in the struggle for his favor.

"You have now seen one of the sights of Babylon," said the Professor. "We will show you others in the morning."

Beyond the palms and the deserted river-bed is the city, a group of huge mounds from which the curious of another world have removed the dust and revealed the foundations. Here are endless mazes of walls, floors, and vaulted chambers all built of bricks laid in asphalt. This is the land to which the people came when they said, "Let us go down into the plain and use bricks for stone and pitch for mortar."

Every brick in these enormous structures is stamped with the name and lineage of a king, the master-builder. Down

at the base of the mound, where the trenches of the excavators are filled with water like the wells of the village, are bricks bearing the name of Hamurabi, and a date twenty-two hundred years before our era. Above them are many bricks bearing a more familiar name. A sloping roadway leads up to an imposing triple gate upon which the figures of bulls and griffins stand out in bold relief. Beyond the gate are the walls and floors of a palace—a palace built upon a palace. The name upon these bricks is that of Nebuchadnezzar. Somewhere among these walls was Daniel's window open toward Jerusalem; somewhere among these cryptic ruins was the burning fiery furnace.

Overlooking one part of the palace stands a gigantic sculptured lion, defiant over the prostrate body of a man. This great block of stone must have been a curiosity indeed in this land of clay, where even a pebble is unheard of. Why it was brought here and how would certainly make an interesting story. It may have been a trophy brought to grace a Babylonian triumph; it may have been an offering from an Assyrian king to appease the god of Babylon for the removal of the capital to Nineveh. Be that as it may, the long journey down



RUINS OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PALACE

the Tigris Valley and across the plains of Irak must have been an eventful one.

Down among the ruins of Nabopolassar's palace is a striking detail, an arch, so far as we can tell the oldest in the world. Did the Chaldean mathematicians invent the arch, or did they learn its principle from an older civilization? Did they, in turn, hand their knowledge down through their neighbors to the Roman architects, or was the value of the arch discovered independently at different times? Upon this page of architectural history the writing is so dim that I fear it will never be read.

Entering Nebuchadnezzar's palace, we find the guard-rooms, the halls of audience, the chambers of the king; but beyond them all, innermost, is the most dramatic of all, the banquet-hall. This place has witnessed the pride and fall of many an empire, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian. Here have been many triumphant feasts, many displays of captive splendor; here has resounded down the centuries to conqueror after conqueror that dread sentence written upon these very walls, "*Mene, mene, tekel uphar-sin.*"

The splendor of wealth, the pride of empire have vanished; the palaces and temples have fallen to shapeless mounds, but still the names remain stamped in strange characters in many languages upon innumerable bricks: "I am Hamurabi; I reared this temple." "I am Nebuchadnezzar; I built this palace."

"I am Alexander; mine is the conquest."

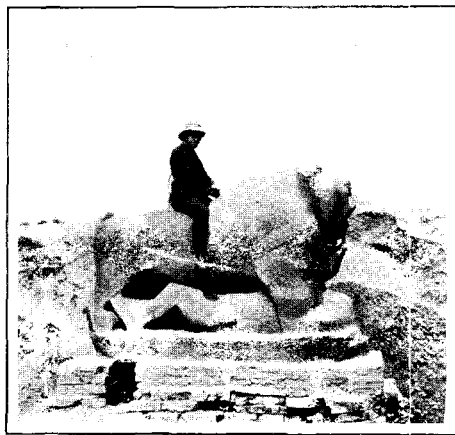
As we explored the palaces and temples we passed groups of workmen who broke into a noisy chant as we approached, calling upon God to bless our exalted generosity. In fact, I fear they shouted this sentiment more from the desire to make a noise than for the sake

of any blessing that might accrue to us therefrom. They are constantly singing at their work, which seemed to us rather commendable than otherwise until we were told that they expended far more energy upon their choruses than upon their work.

That evening, toward sunset, we strolled across the dry channel to the groves of palms beside the village. Here was a scene of peaceful beauty in strange contrast with the dead city. Overhead the feathery palm-leaves lay black against the reddening sky. Underfoot grew rich, green grass, fresh with moisture from the irrigating ditches which had been kept flowing all day long. In the midst of the grove was the well, a shaft fifty feet deep. The sloping palm-trunks over which the water-skins are drawn to the surface stood gaunt, uncanny in the failing light. All was silent, but there was an odor of growing things, a sense of life, and the air was full of moisture.

We turned again toward the palaces where once had been the hanging gardens of Babylon.

A great change had been wrought since those ancient times. The city is an abode of death. Only one living thing remains in this tomb of perished empires, only a single voice is lifted over it. A prophecy remains to be fulfilled. The sun sinks out of sight beyond the palm-trees, the sheep are driven to the shelter of their fold. The gates are closed in the vil-



THE LION OF BABYLON

lage beyond the gardens, and the smoke of evening cooking hovers above the roofs. A dim, gray form slinks behind a pile of ancient bricks. Off among the ruins a quavering, high-pitched cry breaks the stillness. Anguish is there and despair; then the cry is broken by screams of mocking laughter. The prophecy is

fulfilled: "The jackals shall howl in their palaces and the wolves in their pleasant places."

Slowly we strolled back to the hospitable mansion, and sat down again with our hosts. The Herr Professor was speaking:

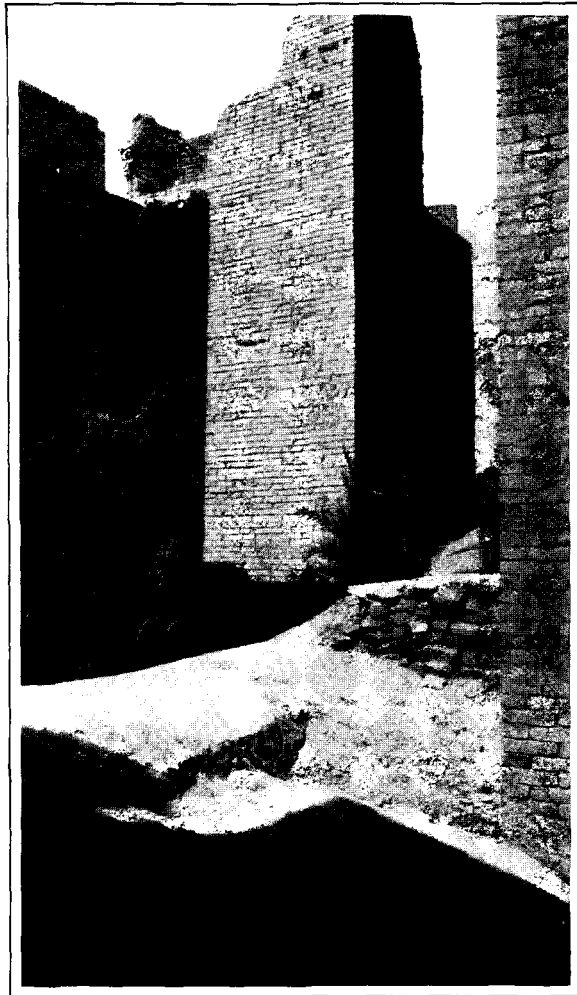
"This neighbor of ours, this Sheik Seyid, is most trying. It is on his account that for a year we had no water to drink. A Persian pilgrim strayed from the road and came to the sheik's house at night. He had with him a mule, loaded with two large boxes. Such an opportunity for securing gain was not to be missed. So the sheik invited the pilgrim to enter the house. But no sooner had he passed the door than he received a knife-thrust in the belly.

"Having thus done a pious deed in slaying a heretical Shia, the holy man and his son broke open the boxes expecting great store of wealth. But instead of carpets and silk they found in each box the embalmed body of one of the late pilgrim's relatives.

"This sent the sheik into a rage: 'It is the work of Sheitan which these infidels have loosed upon us. They have been digging pits in the Kasr where the holy prophet imprisoned him, and he has come out and worked this evil!'

"So he set out to avenge himself upon us poor infidels. He and his son brought the three dead Persians and dropped them into our well. When I came out in the morning I could see a black head above the surface of the water; and then"—the Professor threw up his arms in a gesture of despair—"Ach! by the waters of Babylon I sat down and wept."

We asked the Professor if he had found any signs of the handwriting on the wall, and received this explanation:



RUINS OF THE ISHTAR GATE — AN APPROACH TO NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S PALACE

"That the incident recorded by Daniel was a historic fact, so far as the prophet himself was present, we have every reason to believe. Moreover, we have found marks that would be sufficiently strange to attract the Babylonians, and might well have inspired Daniel's prophecy. These were the marks made by Persian workmen, whom Nebuchadnezzar imported to make the palace and its gate were ornamented. I believe that when Cyrus's army was moving down the Tigris, and Belshazzar was celebrating his departure for the battle-field, some one

in the drunken company caught sight of some of these marks. The attention of the already frightened courtiers once attracted, with the intensity of the inebriated, to such a sign, the story of the hand making the writing would

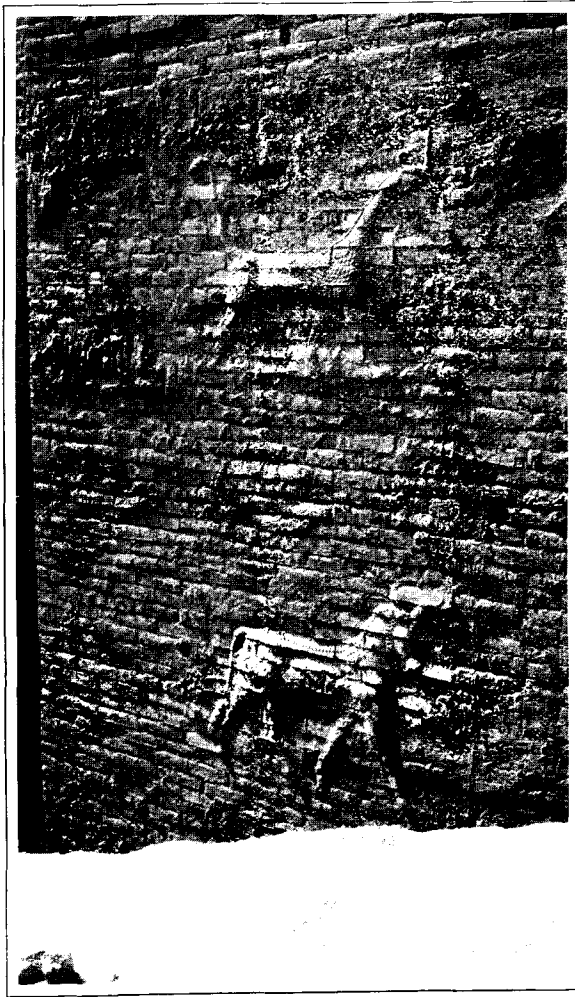
defeat. But Daniel was a man of different caliber, and so well did his bold interpretation of the ominous sign suit the whim of the king that he did not hesitate to accept it. Such is our interpretation of the handwriting on the wall."

We retired early after dinner, and the guest-book was brought to us. "You must write some poetry," said our host; "poetry is necessary." The book was left with us and we were told that we should get no breakfast unless a satisfactory entry appeared in the morning.

The Kasr mound, which the Germans are excavating, is only one of a number of mounds at Babylon, all surrounded by the vast walls described for us by Herodotus, walls that surround an area of a hundred and fifty square miles. A short distance away is the still greater mound of Babil, supposed to have been a zigurrat, a great terraced pyramid temple, such as were built by these settlers in the plains in imitation of the high places on the mountain-tops, where their hill-dwelling ancestors had been wont to worship. Local tradition lends it further glamour by pointing it out as the impious tower that witnessed the confusion of tongues. But the Germans have excavated another zigurrat, close to the palace, where they have an inscription saying: "I have builded this tower as high as the sky." Apparently this was not an uncommon boast

among the temple builders of Mesopotamia.

The work on the Kasr mound is no light matter. Not only does it contain the palace of Nabopolassar filled up by his more powerful son, the partly superimposed palace of Nebuchadnezzar himself, and the ruins that lie below them both, bearing the traces of Sennacherib's



DETAIL OF BAS-RELIEFS—ISHTAR GATE

easily develop. Daniel himself, you will remember, was not in the room when this apparition was seen.

"Belshazzar we know to have been a drunken weakling, doubtless crazed with fear at the time. So the sycophantic flatteries of the Chaldean soothsayers were in vain, and failed to dispel the gloom that held him and the presage of

burning, but also temples, built of mud brick, after the priestly tradition that refused to discard the materials of old-time for the new-fangled burnt bricks of the more advanced civilization. Furthermore, succeeding peoples have made use of the materials of Babylonian times, and the excavators have to carefully level and plan the ruins of Parthian and Greek structures, built of bricks purloined from Nebuchadnezzar's palace, before they can sweep them away and continue their exploration of the more ancient buildings. In later times came the Arabs, using the mounds as quarries, and building towns and villages with bricks bearing the boastful words of ancient kings. As a result, many of the walls are represented by trenches. But as they were built to last, one of them measuring twenty-five yards across, they are not as difficult to trace as might at first glance appear.

Professor Koldewey told us he had been working there at Babylon for seven years, and needed as many more to finish the single mound. Already he had completed the plans of the two old palaces that formed its core, as well as those of scores of less important buildings. His great regret was that the rising water-level would put a stop to his downward work, as soon as the Hindia barrage was completed. But he was not the man to complain when the villagers were getting renewed life, not though it meant the loss to him for ever of those undermost palaces, the buildings that might perhaps throw most light on the history of a long-buried past.

We left Babylon in another arabana,

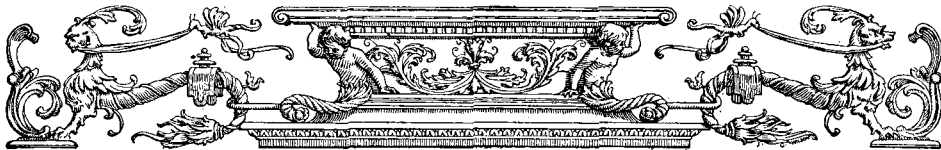
or post-carriage, taking the direct road to Bagdad. With us came an old gray-bearded villager, depending on the Effendi's charity for assistance in his journey to the city. We were soon deep in conversation with him.

"Inshallah," said he, "God willing, I will tell you wherefore I journey to Bagdad. Behold, by the grace of Allah, I have a son who is of an age to marry. I go, therefore, to the house of my brother whom Allah has given a daughter. Her will I take back to my son.

"But my brother is a poor man, Effendim, and can give no dower to his daughter. I, too, am poor—the truth of Allah—and have a daughter. So we have arranged that he also shall take my daughter for his son without a dower, and I am relieved of concern for her. However, I regret that there is no dower, for I am an old man, and very poor."

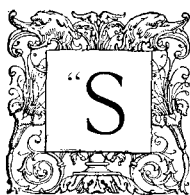
We consoled the old man as best we could. But we could not help recalling the marriage-market of ancient Babylon, described by Herodotus. He tells how the pretty girls were sold to the highest bidder, and the money thus received used as portions for their homely sisters, who went to the man who was willing to take them with the smallest dower. So all were successfully married irrespective of face or fortune.

It is a good ten-hours' drive to Bagdad, and it was with stiff joints that we arrived, late in the afternoon, in our rattletrap stage-coach. But the walk through the bazaars and back across the bridge made us forget the discomforts of the journey. Were we not once more in the City of the Kalifs?



Home Influence

BY ALICE DUER MILLER



STRANGE that Lola has never married," said her brother as she left the room.

His father's eyes turned to him quickly. "Strange?" he answered. "I don't see anything strange about it. What man could do as much for her as I do?"

The air of the dining-room was beginning to fill with the smoke from two long, dark cigars, and to lose the perfume of the thick-petaled, white flowers in the center of the table, and of the pyramids of fruit in silver dishes at the ends.

George Varens glanced round the room. It had been elaborately paneled in the year 1880, and hung with dark, blurred pictures in heavy, gold frames. His father had bought the house soon after his marriage and had it done over according to his own ideas. He had never seen any reason for altering anything since. Neither his children, nor his wife during her lifetime, would have thought of suggesting such a thing.

The dining-room had been the scene of many conflicts between the father and son—conflicts from which George liked to tell himself that he had emerged at last triumphant, independent, his own master. If he came back, as he occasionally did, it was as an equal, or at least as the chief of a friendly tribe, ready to offer counsel or alliance. There were no more conflicts. "No," George used to say, "he knows that I am almost forty years old and the head of an independent business." He never admitted that most of this business had come to him either directly through his father, or indirectly through those who wished to please his father.

A great many people wished to please Oliver Varens, and George himself was among the number. Indeed, his remark about Lola was intended as a compliment, and designed to please. Finding,

however, that it had failed, he did not retreat with undignified haste. Both his hands were engaged in plaiting a little paper wrapper that had held a chocolate, and he did not trouble to take his cigar from his mouth as he answered, "Oh, well, most people like to have some sort of life of their own."

"Lola has a life of her own," the elder man answered, almost roughly. "She is at the head of my house. I never go on a trip without taking her with me; every wish she has I gratify. She is in my confidence as many people, even you, George, would give a good deal to be; and, I can tell you, I have had some excellent suggestions from Lola. Marry! Not she. Why should she?"

It was plain from the tone of this question that Varens wanted an answer; and equally plain from the expression of George's face that he did not mean to give one. He sat smoking and looking aloof. He was disgusted to find that he was still rendered acutely uncomfortable by that note of antagonism in his father's voice. His first impulse was to say something conciliatory, but remembering his independent position he contrived to refrain.

In the pause the butler and two footmen came in with coffee and liqueurs—magnificent blond young Englishmen, they bent over the little, pale man at the head of the table. Like George, they also were afraid of him.

A casual observer might have found Oliver Varens insignificant in appearance; he was sixty-two and looked older; he was pale, with sparse, dark hair and a drooping mustache; but all the vigor of his mind and will had gone into a pair of black eyes, intense, but without sparkle; they never varied, never lightened when he smiled, never darkened when he scowled. They were like two little black openings into what many people considered his little black heart.