

**Royal
Geographical
Society**

with IBG

Advancing geography
and geographical learning

WILEY

Review: Syria, Mesopotamia, and Asia Minor

Author(s): D. G. H.

Review by: D. G. H.

Source: *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Apr., 1911), p. 435

Published by: geographicalj

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1778416>

Accessed: 04-04-2016 19:31 UTC

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at

<http://about.jstor.org/terms>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers), Wiley are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Geographical Journal*

ASIA.

SYRIA, MESOPOTAMIA, AND ASIA MINOR.

'Amurath to Amurath.' By Gertrude Lowthian Bell. *Illustrated*. Pp. xvii. and 370. London: Heinemann. 1911. 16s. net.

Miss Gertrude Bell explains her use of a familiar quotation for the title of a book of travel in her dedicatory letter to Lord Cromer. But ought it not to have been followed by a note of interrogation? For the underlying idea of the book is doubt whether, despite all present appearances, the "Unchanging East" can really be changed. That question was evidently cropping up for ever in Miss Bell's mind, and she is for ever implicitly putting it to her readers. Travelling, as she did, through the period which covered the first realization of constitutional rights in the Ottoman empire, the counter-revolution of 1909, and the deposition of Abdul Hamid, and meeting and talking with all sorts and conditions of men—Arab, Armenian, Turk, Kurd, Circassian, Yezidi, and Anatolian, Miss Bell collected more original material for forming her judgment on the new Ottoman *régime* than any one else has collected who has written a book. Perhaps that is why she enunciates no judgment at all. If she had known less she would have dogmatized more. As it is, she fears to tread where fools rush in. Politics, however, do not concern the Royal Geographical Society, except in so far as they modify economical conditions, or seem likely to modify them; and we pass therefore, with the remark that there is a good deal in the book which prepares us for future changes in political grouping in the Ottoman empire, to matters more strictly germane to this journal. It may be said at once that Miss Bell is far more interested in archæology than she is in geography, and that she hardly concerns herself with the latter unless it is ancient. Her most important contribution consists in the description of ancient sites on the left bank of the Middle Euphrates, which may be identified with one and another of the Parthian stations—a description which has already appeared in a more severe form in the pages of this journal; but incidentally she gives much new information about the distribution of Arab tribes, and the conditions of life on the least-known side of the river. Her dash southward from Hit to seek and find the amazing ruin of the great palace at Ukheidar took her also over fresh ground; and she has laid topographers, interested in the early history of Islam, under a deep obligation by the work she did at Samarra, and her careful description of that immense field of ruin, soon, it is said, to be explored with the spade by German archæologists. Fresh accounts of the Yezidi sanctuary at Sheikh 'Adi and of the legendary place of the Ark's grounding on the summit of Jebel Judi are very welcome. This book will confirm the impression made on all geographers by Miss Bell's earlier volume, 'The Desert and the Sown,' that she is a traveller of very unusual equipment and address. Fearless, tireless, prepared to use for all it is worth the advantage which her sex gives her among desert Arabs and to a less extent among all Orientals, singularly fluent in Arabic, while not unversed in other vernaculars, she adds to so great qualifications a wide general interest in all vestiges of antiquity, and an exceptional knowledge of Christian and Moslem architecture. Withal she is sympathetic by instinct with all sorts of wild life, and is quickly on terms of cordiality with the most diverse men and women, commanding respect and even admiration wherever she appears. Obviously she can go whither she wills in the Nearer East, and hear and see more than most men can see and hear. A nation of explorers has to reckon with one of its most valuable assets in the person of Miss Bell.

D. G. H.