

weapons. Nowhere was virgin soil struck, although a depth of two metres was attained, and there was evidence of earlier deposits.

It is a source of much gratification that we may look back upon so successful a season during this the first year in which excavation in Persia has been permitted to foreign institutions. A more complete account of the Sasanian palace with illustrations of the stucco decoration and other interesting details is being published by the co-sponsor of the expedition, the Pennsylvania Museum of Art, in their *Bulletin* for March.

*Excavations
at Tell Billa and
Tepe Gawra*

THE season at Tell Billa and Tepe Gawra has now closed and, although we have not yet received Dr. Speiser's final report, he has cabled that in the division of objects the Museum has been most fortunate. We have been awarded the colored haematite figurine of a bull and the ivory plaque, the finding of which we reported last month, and the painted terra-cotta censer and the mosaic model shrine reported in the November *Bulletin*. A drawing of the bull constitutes our cover design this month, while the interesting model shrine is shown in Plate X. We need hardly say that these objects will be noteworthy additions to the Museum's Mesopotamian collections.

Further interesting details have been learned con-

cerning a structure in the Assyrian stratum of Tell Billa. It was built of sun-dried brick, each wall encased in a *kisu*, or covering of baked brick; nor was this due to a desire for economy on the part of the builders but rather to their habitual attempt to harken back to the earliest times and to reproduce the oldest conditions as much as possible—it is precisely the sun-dried brick that was first used in Mesopotamia in the construction of shrines for ruling deities. That this actually was a shrine was shown by a fragment of an inscribed brick on which the king tells of having restored the shrine of Ishtar. Another brick reveals the identity of the king, for it bears the name of Shalmaneser, son of Ashurnasirpal, king of Ashur. The temple is thus dated in the middle of the ninth century B. C.

A number of other important inscriptions have been found at Tell Billa; these show considerable variety and include accounts, lists, legal documents and letters. Of great value is a list containing a long series of city names; it should prove most useful in reconstructing the topography of the district of Ninevah about the turn of the second millennium B. C. First in importance among the documents is a letter inscribed on a clay tablet. It came in a clay envelope with the name of the writer on top and the address in the lower half. Running around the middle part of the envelope is the seal impression of the sender which represents two standing figures

flanked by deities standing on lions. The message concerns a certain amount of goods that have been sent to Ninevah and have been charged to the writer's broker, whose name contains the Biblical element Yakub (Jacob), a very rare occurrence in non-Biblical sources.

At Tepe Gawra, work has proceeded into the ninth stratum. In stratum eight an interesting feature was the finding of niche windows such as that shown in Plate XI, which shows also the massiveness of the construction. Stratum seven at Gawra had been largely destroyed by the builders of stratum six, but enough of the older layer was left to indicate two characteristics: a peculiar type of pottery with wide, splaying rim; and a new style in the seals—these were no longer cylindrical and had not only predominantly naturalistic designs, but also geometric patterns peculiar to the period.

*An Unusual
Opportunity*

THE Museum is privileged to exhibit, temporarily at least and permanently it is to be hoped, a large collection of North American Indian Art made by the late Charles H. Stephens. It is a rare occasion to see some of the most admirable and exceptional examples of material of this character ever assembled. Through the kindness of Mrs. Stephens and Mr. D. Owen Stephens, the Museum is accorded the first opportunity to acquire the entire collection. Not



A MODEL SHRINE OF MOSAIC TERRA-COTTA FROM TELL BILLA, IRAQ



A NICHE WINDOW IN A PREHISTORIC BUILDING AT TEPE GAWRA, IRAQ