

## MUSEUM NOTES

### APPOINTMENT.

At a stated meeting of the Board of Managers, held on October 15, General Harry C. Trexler was elected a Manager of the Museum to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of Mr. Jacob S. Disston.

### EXPEDITIONS.

The members of the Ur Expedition reached the ruins at the end of October and work was resumed in the excavations on the 1st day of November. The personnel of the Expedition for this year is as follows. Mr. C. Leonard Woolley, Director of Excavations; Mr. A. S. Whitburn, architect; Rev. Eric Burrows, cuneiformist; Mr. M. W. Mallowan, general archaeological assistant; Mrs. Keeling, special assistant. As we go to press, the first monthly report for the season has been received from Mr. Woolley and the following abstract will serve to indicate the results of the first month's work.

"Our object was twofold, to secure more literary tablets, and to acquire knowledge of the conditions of domestic life at an early period, and in both respects we have been highly successful. Apart from scattered finds, three distinct hoards of tablets have come to light, and though it is too early in the day to say much about these, for when they first come out of the soil they are quite illegible and have to be baked in a furnace and then cleaned and mended before any study of them is possible and even then the study is a slow business, yet from a few examples, thirty or forty in all, which had been accidentally burnt in a fire which destroyed the building in which they were found and were therefore hard enough to be cleaned or partially cleaned forthwith, we may conclude that the discovery is of real importance. Instead of the business documents, receipts and contracts, which are commonly found on the site, these are all of a literary or scientific character; some are mathematical, and give lists of square and cube roots of all the numbers up to sixty; some are hymns; some record the pious foundation of early kings, important for the history and topography of the city; on one there seems to be mention of an unknown king of Ur, possibly one of the rulers of the Second Dynasty of which



we know no more than that it existed. If these are fair samples, then amongst the hundreds of tablets now being packed in sand for firing there should be literary material of the first class.

“Of more immediate interest are the houses in which the tablets were found. These date from just about the time when Abraham was living at Ur—they were first put up about 2100 B. C., and were inhabited, with various minor rebuildings and repairs, for some two hundred years,—and what strikes one at once is the high degree of comfort and even luxury to which the ruins bear witness. Two-storied buildings solidly constructed in burnt brick (some of the walls today stand fifteen and twenty feet high) were almost exactly like the best houses of modern Baghdad. There was a central court with a wooden gallery running round it onto which the upper rooms opened: the family lived above; on the ground floor were the reception room and the domestic offices, kitchens and servants’ quarters: the rooms were lofty—in one case the brick staircase is preserved up to ten feet and was originally carried up higher in wood, so that the ground-floor rooms must have been twelve or fifteen feet high—and although all traces of decoration have gone and we have only the bare walls with occasionally a little mud plastering and whitewash, yet we can scarcely be wrong in supposing that the furnishing matched the excellence of the construction. It is the first time that private houses of the period have been discovered, and the discovery changes altogether our ideas of how men lived then; now we have a number of separate dwellings, forming blocks divided by rather narrow streets, the large houses of wealthy citizens cheek by jowl with the four or five-roomed homes of their poorer neighbours, and it is easy to repeople the ruined courts and chambers and to understand the surroundings of the men who once inhabited them and pored over the tables of cube roots? Only one room, —a long narrow chamber in No. 7 Quiet Street,—puzzled us altogether. It was a common custom to bury the dead under the houses in which they had lived, and often beneath the pavement we find clay coffins or vaulted brick tombs containing together with the body clay vessels of offerings, food for the journey to the next world, and perhaps the signet seal of the house owner. But this room was distinguished by having a niche in the end wall and in front of the niche a raised block of



brickwork like an altar, and all round this, under the pavement, there lay thick together nearly thirty big bowls containing the bones of little children. There was no Moloch in the Sumerian pantheon to demand infant sacrifice, yet it is hard to believe that within a comparatively short space of time and in a single household thirty babies should die a natural death: can we have here a domestic shrine dedicated to some deity kindly to children whereto friends or relatives might bring their little ones for burial? If so, there was in the Sumerian religion of Abraham's time a sentiment more intimately human than the texts would lead us to suppose."

The expedition to Beisan has been at work since the first of September and will bring the season's excavations to a close in January. About half of the season has been spent upon the cemetery and the other half upon the top of the acropolis. The results of this year's work will be presented in a later number of the JOURNAL. The members of the expedition during this season are: Mr. Alan Rowe, Director of Excavations; Mr. G. M. Fitzgerald, first assistant archæologist; Mr. S. Yeivan, second assistant archæologist; Mr. Charles Little, draughtsman; Mr. Terontieff, surveyor; Hassan Mahomad Effendi, artist; Mr. Cecil Haiat, secretary.

#### GIFTS.

Miss Sophia Cadwalader has presented to the Museum a pair of Egyptian vases of the 18th Dynasty, formerly in the MacGregor Collection. These vases, which are unusual in form, size and decoration, have been presented by Miss Cadwalader in memory of Mr. Eckley B. Coxe, Jr.

Mr. George Outhette has presented a small ethnological collection from Venezuela.

Mr. Eldridge R. Johnson has presented three jade carvings and one lapis lazuli carving made in the imperial workshop of Ch'ien Lung. These carvings will be described in the next number of the JOURNAL.

Mr. Eldridge R. F. Johnson has presented two Japanese ivory carvings, one representing a gardener and the other a crawfish.

Mr. Walter E. Hering has presented a pottery bowl from Costa Rica.

PURCHASES.

One large Chinese fresco in four sections from a mountain to the northwest of the village of Ching Hua in the Province of Honan. This fresco, which was described by Miss Fernald in the last number of the MUSEUM JOURNAL, is attributed to the T'ang Dynasty.

A Chinese pottery tablet from a tomb of the Han Dynasty.

In the Persian Section the following objects have been acquired.

Two pairs of painted wooden doors with fretted gold background on which medallions are painted in exquisite miniature technique. These doors, said to be from a Palace of Shah Abbas in Isfahan, are exquisite examples of 16th Century workmanship and are companion pieces to two pairs already in the Persian collection in the Museum.

A pair of carved wooden shrine doors. One of the inscribed panels gives the names of the donor and the carpenter and the date: 727 A. H. (1326 A. D.).

A fragment of painted wall surface from the same Palace of Shah Abbas at Isfahan.

A panel of four Damascus tiles with blue ground and Arabic inscription in white.

In the Egyptian Section the following objects have been acquired:

A limestone statuette of Queen Nefertiti.

A rose granite head of a Pharaoh found at Karnak.

A black granite head of Thothmes III (?).

A white stone sarcophagus with inscription.

A green basalt sarcophagus, inscribed.

A piece of granite relief from Sammanoud.

A Coptic vestment.

The collections in the Ethnological Section have been increased by the acquisition of twenty six ethnological specimens from the Soudan collected by Rev. Dr. David S. Oyler, a fine Marquesas club and a Soloman Island club.

LECTURES

During the winter months the Saturday and Sunday Courses of Lectures in the Auditorium of the Museum will be continued and on Tuesday afternoons the Docents will give Talks in the Galleries of the Museum.