



PLATE I

The ziggurat of Nippur
seen from Tablet Hill

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NIPPUR TODAY

Plans Laid

Forty-nine years ago this May, John Henry Haynes closed the fourth season of work at Nippur, packed his equipment and departed. Since that time the ruins of this ancient city have provided shelter only for foxes and jackals. Year after year seasonal rains and incessant winds have gradually filled the pits and trenches with sand and debris. Other sites in Mesopotamia claimed the attention of scholars. New and extremely important material has been recovered from Ur and Gawra—to mention two outstanding examples—by expeditions in which our Museum has had a part, and many objects from these sites are in our collection. Now, after all these years, Nippur again occupies a prominent place in the excavation plans of the University of Pennsylvania.

With the war over and active field research once more becoming a matter of real concern, the staff of the Babylonian Section began looking for a site at which to resume its program of excavations. In the course of our planning, Nippur was considered among other ancient Southern Babylonian cities as a possible site for investigation. Then, last September, Dr. Thorkild Jacobsen, Director of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, stopped by en route from Baghdad to Chicago and urged with all the enthusiasm he could muster that our two institutions undertake a joint expedition to Nippur. He stated that, as he saw it, no site in ancient Babylonia could be compared with Nippur for promise of important results to be obtained from excavations. Little persuasion was necessary, and we soon agreed to reopen the famous mounds which had furnished so much rich material in the past.

In order to get started as soon as possible, a short season was planned that fall and an expedition staff hastily assembled and shipped off within a few weeks. Dr. Donald McCown, Associate Professor of Archaeology of the Oriental Institute, was appointed Field Director; Dr. Francis R. Steele, Assistant Curator of the Babylonian Section of the University

Museum, Assistant Field Director and Epigrapher; Dr. Carleton S. Coon, Curator of Ethnology, University Museum, Anthropologist; and Mr. Joseph Caldwell, Junior Archaeologist of the Smithsonian Institution, Archaeological Architect. Mrs. McCown served in the dual role of Registrar and Housekeeper, while Mrs. Coon assisted her husband in his anthropological studies and also made drawings of some of the objects.

Sailing from New York

The expedition, having begun on such short notice, was accompanied by considerable confusion in its early stages. An intensive search for passage on the first boat sailing to a Near Eastern port was rewarded and for a while it appeared that we would sail on the liner SS *Execorda*, but a shipyard hold-up cancelled this sailing. However the American Export Company provided space on another of their ships, the SS *Meridian Victory*, a freighter of the Victory class. Consequently, our rooms were scarcely palatial. We occupied the quarters constructed for the wartime armed guard crew under the after gun-deck; double-decked bunks jammed together in a room over the propeller shaft. Since we were the only passengers aboard, we had complete freedom of the deck and ate at the officers' mess. The matter of securing a passport and the necessary visas almost resulted in the writer missing the boat and flying out later to meet the rest of the party in Baghdad. Fortunately, the necessary documents were procured in time for all of us to travel together. Then our sailing was delayed for two days by bad weather; but finally, on October seventh, the expedition set sail from American Export Pier D, Jersey City. We reached our first port of call in a remarkably short time: Pier F, only a few hundred yards downstream! After taking on quantities of mail here, we really left American shores for good. A leisurely and relatively placid crossing of the Atlantic provided ample time for jangled nerves to recuperate. But after a week or so all hands were yearning for Beirut and action. However, it was not until three and a half weeks after leaving New York—having first visited Marseilles, Naples, Trieste, and Alexandria—that we finally reached Beirut. Here we were met by members of the faculty of the American University and welcomed as guests in their homes. During our short stay in Beirut, two members of the party engaged in a brief archaeological survey at a place called locally "the flint factory." A little south

of the city a small neck of land, consisting largely of a chalky limestone with large flint nodules, juts into the sea. This flint material has been worked on the spot for many years by ancient craftsmen, and the surface of the ground is littered with chips and broken implements left by the early artisans. A careful search is usually rewarded by fairly good specimens of Palaeolithic tools which were imperfectly worked and hence discarded. We collected a few samples of these ancient tools ourselves. On another occasion, Dr. Coon and Dr. McCown travelled north to visit the cave where "Egbert," a celebrated Palaeolithic gentleman, was discovered. His skull now reposes in the Peabody Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

After a few delightful days in the beautiful city of Beirut we journeyed on to Baghdad. Leaving the coast of Lebanon at nine o'clock one morning, we rode up over the mountains to Damascus. From this point we travelled across the Syrian Desert to Baghdad in an air-conditioned trailer-bus, arriving at eight o'clock the next morning. It is a most unusual experience to leave roads and trails behind, travelling right across the trackless desert. The huge vehicle sways and lurches over the uneven terrain very much like a small power boat on a rolling sea.

Arrangements for Work

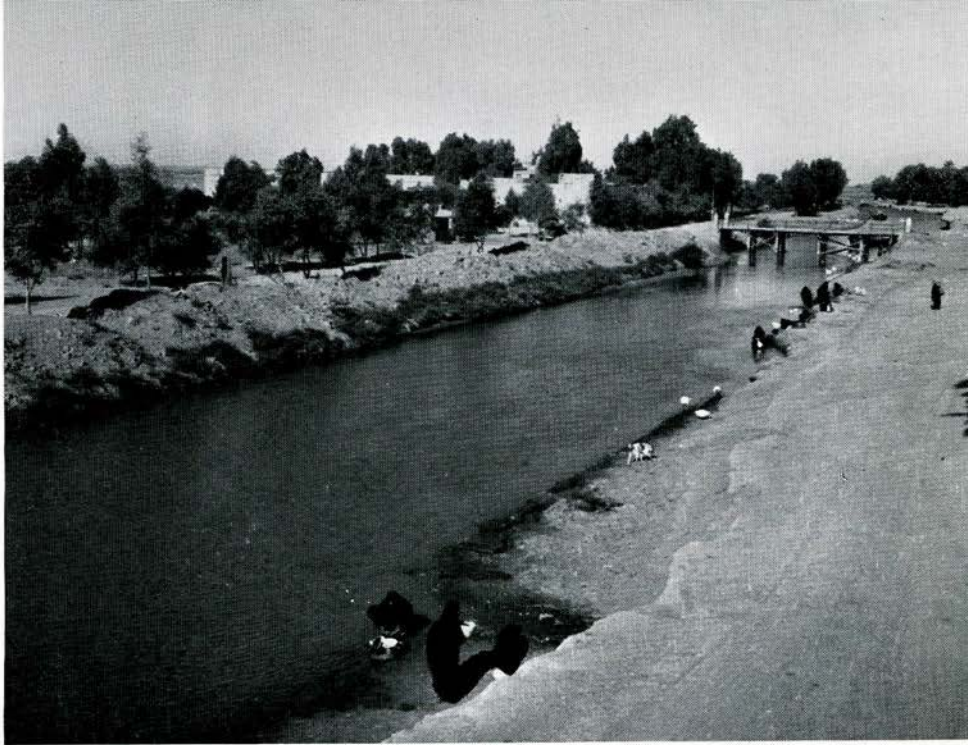
Having arrived at Baghdad and installed ourselves at the Sindabad Hotel on the banks of the Tigris River, all sorts of ideas about visiting the museums and bazaars of the city came to mind; but these dreams soon vanished. In a very short time a lot of work had to be done. We had first to procure the official commission from the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and then to make arrangements for equipment and labor. There was more than enough to keep all of us busy during the few days we spent in Baghdad. One morning Mr. Caldwell and I went out to the home of one of the Iraqi officials on the outskirts of town to make an inventory of the excavation equipment stored there by Dr. Robert Braidwood of the Oriental Institute after his last expedition. The stuff was in a small garage which was piled high with furniture, tools, and boxes. We were assisted in this task by five Arab laborers lent to us by the Antiquities Department. However, they knew almost no English and we knew even less Arabic. Willingness and sign language combined, so that we got along fine, and no untoward incident occurred

with the single exception of a brief interruption during which a large green scorpion was dispatched.

On several occasions members of the party ventured into the bazaar to purchase tools and supplies for the expedition. This is indeed a venture—make no mistake about that. As you approach the *suq* (or bazaar) you find it impossible to believe that even one more small boy could force his way into the already existing crowd, yet porters carrying tremendous loads, heavily laden pack animals, and even flocks of sheep constantly make their way in and out. The bazaar in Baghdad is typical of similar institutions throughout the country. It consists of a long, narrow, mud street roofed over and lined with shops. This street runs at right angles to Harun ar-Rashid Street, the main thoroughfare of Baghdad. Most of the shops in the bazaar are no bigger than and, in fact, quite similar in general proportions to the average store window on Chestnut Street—minus the glass. These shops are piled high with wares, and the proprietor, seated at the front, calls out to the passers-by. On one occasion, when Mrs. McCown and I were shopping in the dry goods bazaar, I felt a gentle but persistent nudging at my elbow. Upon turning to see what she wanted I found to my surprise that it was not she but a small donkey politely requesting permission to pass. Matching courtesy with courtesy, I stood aside and the patient animal went on through the crowd.

Having collected all of our equipment and hired two large trucks to transport it, the caravan was assembled and set out for Afej, a town five miles south of Nippur and about 130 miles from Baghdad by road. The caravan left about ten in the morning of November fifteenth and arrived in Afej shortly before midnight that same day, having been accompanied the last twenty-five miles across the salt flats from Diwaniyeh by a police escort including a large truck with a mounted machine gun.

The passage of years has effected considerable change in Iraq. When the earlier expeditions came out, Afej was a miserable little Arab village which Dr. Peters described as a "veritable Venice" because the local mud houses were grouped together on clumps of relatively dry ground in the middle of a swamp. In those days Diwaniyeh was the residence of the *qaimaqam* or mayor. Today Diwaniyeh is the capital of the *liwa* or province of the same name and the residence of the *mutasarraf* or governor, while Afej is a thriving community of itself with its own



(Top) The main canal running through Afej. The bridge leads into the *sug* (at right).



PLATE II

(Bottom) The *sug* at Afej.



(Top) Afej. Expedition headquarters and adjoining *hammam*. Yakob, the cook, stands in the doorway.

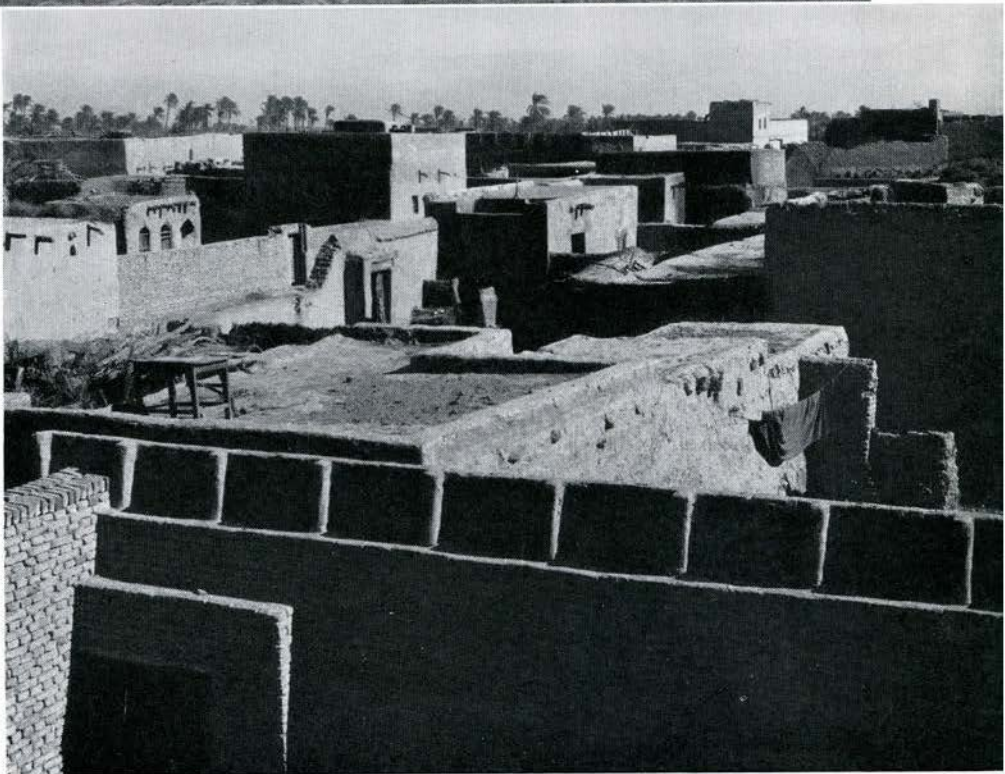


PLATE III

(Bottom) Looking east over the village of Afej from the roof of expedition headquarters.

qaimaqam, judge, doctor, and irrigation officer. In many respects Afej served the present expedition as Diwaniyeh had the earlier ones. It is interesting to note that in 1900 it took Haynes ten days to cover the distance from Baghdad to Nippur. He travelled from Baghdad to Hillah by camel caravan. Today the two cities are connected by a macadam road. South of Hillah, however, the road is little better today than it was fifty years ago and qualifies as a road more by virtue of use than maintenance. From Hillah Haynes continued south by boat down the Euphrates River—and later the Daghara Canal—rather than going by road as we did.

With the cooperation and assistance of the government authorities, Dr. McCown had rented a house in Afej as expedition headquarters. Nothing was said about the fate of whatever occupants it might have had, but we were informed that we had the best house in town. Although it was rather small for our purposes it was clearly better than most of the local houses. Our house faced directly on the street paralleling the canal. This street was almost continuously occupied by curious children, geese, and any number of nondescript dogs, so that there was no lack of mutual entertainment. The limited number of rooms forced us to convert the entrance hall into a dining room. The house—our home for more than a month—was constructed of yellow brick and had rooms lying along three sides of an open court. The two large rooms downstairs were occupied respectively by the McCowns and Coons. Across from the Coons' room were two smaller rooms, half as high, with a somewhat larger room over them. One of these smaller rooms was the magic chamber in which our cook, Yakob, concocted a marvellous variety of viands on a simple two-burner kerosene stove. During the course of our stay in Afej we never ceased to wonder at the regular succession of fascinating foods which emerged from this oversize hatbox. The other little room, which had previously been used as a storeroom, became the bedchamber of our houseboy Thomas, when once it had been cleaned out and its scorpion occupants evicted. The room over them was occupied by Mr. Caldwell and the writer. The government commissioner, Mahmud al-Amin, occupied a small chamber over the McCowns.

Next door to us was the local *hammam* or bath-house which we visited, a week or so after we arrived, to investigate the possibilities of removing accumulations of Nippur real estate from our persons. The necessity for

this operation became acute at a rather early stage as a result of several severe dust storms during the first part of the dig. As a matter of fact, on three occasions the north wind blowing sand across the top of Tablet Hill got so strong that we had to stop work around noon. It is difficult if not impossible to get satisfactorily cleansed using a small basin of water. However, the main difficulty confronting a bathing program for the party was the problem of heating water, and our neighbor, who ran the *hammam*, claimed that he could provide plenty of hot water for us. But one visit to his establishment persuaded us to wait until we could arrange facilities of our own. The *hammam* consisted of several large dimly-lit vaulted chambers some with pools of hot water and others with cold. This place was well patronized by the local residents and must have resembled a New York subway car during rush hour when they all assembled for their weekly bath. We were somewhat reluctant to share bathing facilities with untold numbers of Afejis. From time to time we purchased kerosene and gasoline in five gallon tins. When the tins were empty we cut the tops out and used them for water buckets. By the time a sufficient number of water buckets had been assembled, we could heat our own water and bathe at home in more private circumstances. This operation was accomplished in a collapsible canvas bath tub, and baths were scheduled one a day with complete impartiality. One's bath day was indeed a notable date, in spite of the fact that the water came directly from the canal via the gasoline heater and still bore a goodly portion of its normal animal and mineral content. But a hot tub is a hot tub, and even turbid water, when it is hot, has certain cleansing powers and an amazing morale value.

Entertainment

Iraqi entertainment procedure is nothing if not unique. We had opportunity to sample Arab hospitality among both bedouin and townspeople. Before work actually began on the mounds, the members of the expedition were invited by sheikh Suleiman to a party in his village. We were entertained in the men's clubhouse, called a *diwan*. This is a long vaulted building made entirely of reeds. A number of reeds formed into bundles 3 feet in diameter are set on end about 6 to 8 feet apart and bent to make an arch about 15 feet high. Upon this framework reed mats are fastened to make a long single-room building 60 feet or more

in length and 25 feet wide. In the middle is a hearth with a charcoal fire on which the Arabs apparently brew coffee continuously, for the liquid is jet black and tastes like tincture of caffeine. Along the walls beautiful rugs and cushions are placed for the guests whom the sheikh is entertaining. After an extended period of polite conversation, the Arab coffee was served in the following manner: a man bearing a fairly large brass coffee urn and a small cup approached the guests one by one and poured about a tablespoonful of the liquid into the cup which he offered each guest in turn. Having finished this draught, we returned the cup to the servant who would refill it for us unless we indicated by wiggling it as we gave it back to him that we had had enough. When we were satisfied, the same procedure was followed for the next guest with the same cup. A little later on another servant appeared with a tray upon which were small glasses of strong and highly sweetened tea. These were passed around with the usual formalities, and conversation continued. Finally a long procession of men bearing huge platters piled high with food entered the building. These platters were placed in concentric circles on mats on the floor. The guests seated themselves around this tempting repast and set to. Our host presided over the feast, declining to partake himself as a token of respect to the guests, but employed himself with serving the various members of the party choice bits of meat and other morsels of food with his bare hands. After the meal we went outside to wash our hands (since implements were not employed) and found a man standing there with a pitcher of water, towels, and a piece of soap. When we had finished a valiant job, it hardly appeared that we had made a dent in the copious supply, and I for one was somewhat concerned about the possible waste of food. That my concern was unnecessary soon became apparent, for the same platters were transferred to a spot just outside the *diwan* where the retinue of the sheikh gathered and enjoyed themselves. Since there was still some left when they had finished, a third sitting assembled and helped themselves. After a while I lost track of the various sittings but noted that nothing was left or lost. A short time later, having expressed our appreciation to our kind host, we departed, all the while under close observation by the assembled villagers.

On another occasion we were invited to a sheikh's party in his town house. This party was given in honor of the *mutasarriif* of Diwaniyeh.



(Top) Sheikh Suleiman with some of his people outside the *diwan* in which he entertained expedition members.

PLATE IV

(Bottom) One of the two mat "tables" loaded with food, placed outside after banquet in the *diwan* was over.





The *diwan* at Sheikh Suleiman's village. Notice the reed columns. Outside, some of the men of the village watch with great interest the progress of the party.

The hour set was 6.30 p.m. Having arrived we seated ourselves around a large room and engaged in polylingual conversation covering every conceivable topic from Persian fables to Russian foreign policy. Various beverages were served, alcoholic and otherwise (the otherwise included the now familiar Arab coffee and Arab tea), accompanied by nuts and fruit. This went on until the westerners became faint from hunger and then, after several tantalizing preliminaries, the guest of honor gave a signal and the party proceeded to the dining room at 10:30. Here we found a table piled high with luscious, if somewhat cooled-off food, and everybody pitched in as though he hadn't seen food for a fortnight. In less than half an hour, after we had eaten all we could possibly hold comfortably and perhaps a little more, it was time to set

out in automobiles for the return journey over roads which make the average American detour seem like a state highway by comparison. For the first two or three times there is novelty to such an experience, but when invitations average more than one per week it becomes exhausting. After a long day on the mound one has little strength left for active night life of any kind.

Excavations Begin

Six weeks after leaving New York, with our base of operations established in Afej, we were ready to begin work at the site. As a result of the short time we could spend on the mound, our first season was more in the nature of a preliminary dig rather than a full campaign. Therefore we decided to concentrate on two places among the ruins of Nippur: the temple area of Enlil and the so-called Tablet Hill. In this connection it is interesting to note that as a result of a survey made by Dr. Hilprecht in 1889, the first time he explored the area, he reported as follows with regard to the mound which he suspected would contain documents: "This section of the ruins seemed from the very beginning to be the most important mound for our work next to the temple ruin proper." It was a reasonable guess for anyone inspecting these ancient ruins that the temple area would be located close to the *ziggurat* or temple stage-tower, whose impressive height relative to the rest of the mounds made it rather easy to locate. Dr. Hilprecht reasoned further that the buildings containing the archives of the temple officials would probably be located within the mound just across the ancient canal from the temple. This mound he called Tablet Hill. Subsequent seasons at Nippur brought to light thousands of documents of every description from the now-famous Tablet Hill. The excavations which produced them, however, consisted largely of trenches and soundings in this mound, and the larger part of it was still untouched at the close of the last expedition. Furthermore, these same two areas were pointed out as the chief points of interest worthy of further investigation in a report which Dr. Legrain prepared for Dr. Gordon, then Director of the University Museum, in 1921.

The importance of the temple area lies in the fact that although the outer wall of the temple complex was noted by the earlier expeditions, the temple of Enlil itself has never been excavated at all. The temple of any city is one of the most important buildings to investigate, but in

the case of the Ekur Temple of Enlil at Nippur the normal importance is considerably increased by the fact that Enlil headed the Sumerian pantheon and was the leading deity of Mesopotamia from earliest historic times down to the ascendancy of Marduk of Babylon in the first quarter of the second millennium B.C. Therefore, the reigning monarchs of the land, no matter where their respective capitals might be, took pains to care for Enlil's temple in Nippur and, presumably, made handsome votive offerings. This temple ought, therefore, to be rich in architectural and religious materials for the history of the ancient Near East. As a result, when Dr. Jacobsen, Director of the Oriental Institute in Chicago, returned from a brief survey trip to Iraq last September, charged with enthusiasm over the potentialities which lay in digging the same two areas, his eagerness found a ready response among the Babylonian staff of the University Museum, and it was soon decided that the two institutions should reopen the famous mounds of Nippur.

Last fall as we crossed the bridge over the last irrigation canal which separated us from the site, the mounds of the ancient city of Nippur came into view in the distance. My first view of this great site brought to mind the words of Professor Hilprecht as the pioneer party arrived in 1889 to initiate the Nippur Expedition. "Finally, on the third morning, Bint el-Amir (the temple tower ruin) majestically towering above the wide stretched mounds of Nuffar (Nippur) rose clear on the horizon. More than 2000 years ago the huge terraces and walls of the most renowned Babylonian sanctuary had crumbled to a formless mass. . . . Even at a distance I began to realize that not twenty, not fifty years would suffice to excavate this important site thoroughly." And so it is today. On every side the level plain stretches, dotted here and there with clumps of palms indicating the presence of wells or canals. But dominating the whole like a distant mountain range loom the majestic mounds. As we drew near, the little house constructed by Haynes on the highest point of the *ziggurat* came into view, as well as the ruins of the old expedition house constructed at the base of the mound many years ago. It seemed almost presumptuous for a handful of men to attack this great mass of ruins.

The labor force employed on the dig totalled nearly 200 men. A score of these, including the foremen, were specialists brought down for the job from their home in northern Iraq. They are called *Shergatis* after

the name of their village Qal'at Sherqat which is near the site of ancient Ashur, capital of the Assyrian empire. They have received special training in excavation and are used by most expeditions as pickmen. It is their job to do the careful work of tracing walls, locating and clearing floors, and removing what objects the excavators themselves do not handle. The next class of men are the shovel-men who work together with the *hizza*-men in removing earth and debris. The *hizza*-men are so called for the *hizza* which they use to carry dirt. A *hizza* is a small goat-hair mat 3 feet wide and about 4 feet long with a loop of heavy cotton material connecting the two corners at one end and short cloth handles about a foot long at each corner of the other end. It is employed in the following fashion. The loop is hung over one shoulder with the *hizza* hanging down the opposite side. The handles are grasped, one in each hand, and the mat spread out in front of its bearer. After it has been filled with dirt by the shovel-man, it is swung by the handles over the opposite shoulder and the bearer trudges off to the dump with his load. Here he turns his back to the edge of the dump and releases the handles, allowing the dirt to fall at his feet. Back he goes to the area being dug, to repeat the performance. Our *Shergatis* had arrived in Afej at about the time we did and had set up their tent encampment at the foot of the mound not far from the ruins of the old expedition house. The other workmen were hired locally and flocked in from neighboring villages and camps.

In accordance with our decision to begin work in the Temple area and on Tablet Hill simultaneously, we planned to open a twenty-meter square in the latter mound and clear away the debris of accumulated sand and late Parthian walls from the former. The survey was made on Friday, November 19, which was a Moslem holiday, so that all would be ready for work to begin the next day. We had arranged with the local authorities and the sheikhs to have about 150 Arab workmen on hand from the local villages, but to our surprise, when we reached the mound Saturday morning, we found that our specialists, the *Shergatis*, were the only ones present. Somehow or other the germ of western labor practice had apparently infiltrated Afej and the sheikhs had refused to let their men work for the agreed wage. I suppose you might call this an Iraqi "*sheikh-down*." However, after three days of negotiations, cajoling, threatening, and persuasive speeches, an agreement was reached,

and the local workmen showed up on the terms of the earlier arrangement. In the meantime we set to work on Tablet Hill with the eighteen *Shergatis*. Although all of these men are highly qualified pickmen—the masters of the trade—it was necessary for some to wield shovels and others to carry dirt for the first few days. This they did willingly and cheerfully, so little time was lost.

As the first earth was moved and we got below the surface, a laconic remark in Haynes' diary, of March 2, 1899, came to mind: "Graves everywhere!" I can think of no more appropriate designation for most of this first season's work on Tablet Hill. Almost everywhere we dug a burial of some kind turned up, some with grave objects such as beads and glass bottles. We soon discovered that we had opened an Islamic graveyard, and the modest area under excavation yielded 130 skeletons of all ages and descriptions. Among the bones of early Arab ladies and gentlemen, some accompanied by children, we found the complete skeletons of a full-grown salugi and a puppy. Apparently even an early Moslem boy's best friend was his dog.

Each morning when we got to the mound, we found our *Shergatis* busily engaged in clearing the bones of recently discovered skeletons or tracing the remains of walls as they began to appear below the graves. We invariably received a warm welcome but soon learned that it was not our persons so much as the digging tools we provided for them which inspired this cordial reception. Dr. Coon, having learned by previous experience that sailor's needles with wooden handles made excellent tools for uncovering skeletons, had brought a number of them with him to Nippur. These, together with Grade A rubber-set paint brushes, fruit knives and occasionally serving spoons, proved to be indispensable to the pickmen in their job. Consultations between the staff and the pickmen with regard to problems in tracing walls or locating floors were complicated by a confusion of tongues. The *Shergatis* were from northern Iraq, Dr. Coon spoke Moroccan Arabic and Dr. McCown a Palestinian dialect, while Mr. Caldwell and I employed a dialect all our own—largely English with copious use of gestures. It was truly remarkable that we understood one another at all. One word, however, was soon well-known and most welcome to all concerned: "*faidosh*," spoken quietly by the excavator in charge to a

nearby workman, was picked up and echoed from mound to mound by the Arabs. A rough translation of its meaning is: "time to knock off."

The Temple Area

When the local labor strike had been satisfactorily concluded and sufficient labor was on hand to begin the enormous task of removing ancient debris, relatively recently drifted sand and the remains of Parthian walls from the area where the temple complex of Enlil stood, selected pickmen were put on the job, and our foreman, Halaf, placed in charge. It is by no means metaphoric to say that now the dust really began to fly. A hundred men in steady streams carrying sand and dirt back and forth from the excavation to the dump alone would raise quite a cloud of dust. Add to this a strong north or north-east wind which had already blown over many miles of sand dunes to the north. As the work progressed, sections of a large earthen platform of a late period were uncovered. Even more interesting, at one place a small square of the Ashurbanapal pavement was uncovered. Its connection with this king was evidenced by the inscription stamped upon some of the bricks which referred to a reconstruction project on the temple of Enlil which this king had undertaken. With this level located, we now have a fixed point to work back from in relating the earlier levels of the temple to each other.

One day I went up to the little house which Haynes had built on top of the *ziggurat*. From this vantage point I got a remarkable view of the excavation below where the work of clearing the temple of Enlil was proceeding apace. Here and there on the higher points—on top of the ruins of Parthian walls—pickmen labored industriously prying loose the enormous Parthian bricks, more than a cubic foot in size. In fact, some of the *hizza* "men"—between ten and eleven years old—were too small to carry a whole brick away, so these had to be broken up before they could be removed to the dump. From a distance this earth-moving operation reminded me a little of a host of ants busily engaged in removing earth from the ground.

A never-ending problem which attended the excavation was that of procuring water for the laborers. The fact that our vehicles frequently broke down only added to this difficulty. On several occasions, members of the staff acted in the role of Iraqi "Gunga Din," driving the jeep and

(Top) Uncovering some rooms in the first building level reached on Tablet Hill. Dr. Mahmud, representative of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities, is at right.



(Middle) Digging into the Achaemenian level on Tablet Hill. Notice man with *hizza*.



PLATE V

(Bottom) The writer sketching an Achaemenian burial on Tablet Hill.

trailer to a water hole in the neighboring canal. We acted only as chauffeur and supervisor, however, and took with us four Afejis to fill and carry the cans. On one particular occasion when it was my turn to get water for the camp, I had a boy who sang en route. Arab music is strange to the western ear, but the general effect, in my opinion, was at least as good as most programs that I have heard on automobile radios in this country, and in the present instance caused no drain on the jeep battery. When we reached the water hole, nearly all of the unoccupied members of the neighboring village turned out to watch the performance and offer advice. I could take no more part in the conversation than my limited knowledge of Arabic would permit, so when disputes arose as to who should walk down into the chill water to fill the cans or how they should be loaded on the trailer, I made up for my lack of vocabulary with frequent use of gestures and increased volume of tone. Incidentally, on two of these trips I met tottery old gentlemen who claimed knowledge of Haynes and Geere, members of the expedition of nearly fifty years ago. It was impossible to prove the truth of their assertions, but the general appearance of these venerable gentlemen argued strongly in favor of their integrity.

On two occasions we were visited on the mound by groups of school children. One group came from the local school in Afej which, by the way, was directly across the canal from our house. Dr. Coon lectured to the group upon the technique of measuring skeletons while still in the ground and removing fairly well preserved skulls for future study. Some of the children appeared a bit reluctant to approach the relics of their ancestors, but the anxiety of most was overcome by their curiosity and several almost fell into the excavations, so eager were they to see what was going on. Dr. McCown explained more generally about our purpose in digging at Nippur and guided the group around the mounds. The second group came from the school at Diwaniyeh. This time Mr. Caldwell did the honors. While inspecting the ruins of the temple, the superintendent of the Diwaniyeh school asked if he could take an inscribed brick with him. Being granted permission, he selected a good specimen and started off with his prize only to be apprehended by one of the pickmen and accused of stealing antiquities. A heated argument ensued, and the "culprit" was finally released upon the insistence of Mr. Caldwell.

Close of Excavations

Near the end of our short season, Dr. McCown decided to investigate one of the depressions adjacent to our square on Tablet Hill in order to determine how deep the early expedition had dug into this mound. Accordingly, I laid off a small square to the east of our present dig and in the bottom of a depression from which, according to Haynes, many of the library tablets had come. This test pit was only 5 meters on each side—just big enough for one pickman to dig. Opening my first excavation area was an interesting experience. After we had lined up the north line of the small square with the north limit of the main excavation by means of a transit, we drove a stake into the ground about 50 meters east of the main square. Then, armed with four surveying pins, a ball of string and a meter tape, and accompanied by Najim Abdullah, the pickman, I scrambled down over the dump and measured out the square and set the man to work. As a result of my connection with this portion of the dig, I developed a special affection for "little Mr. 5 by 5," as I called it because of its size.

No sensational material finds were made here, to be sure, but important information resulted even from two weeks' exploration in this test pit, for we discovered that the earlier expedition had apparently not reached the beginning of the Isin-Larsa period during their excavations on Tablet Hill: that is to say, what remains there may be at this spot of scribal schools, library collections or tablet material generally prior to 2000 B.C. appears to lie untouched below the lowest point heretofore dug. This, of course, opens up great possibilities with regard to the discovery of documents from earlier ages, especially the Ur III, Sargonid and Early Dynastic Periods.

Only too soon, pressure of work elsewhere made it necessary to close this first season of renewed excavations at Nippur. The worth of the present brief season must not be judged by the number and size of the objects recovered but rather by their character. Abundant evidence points to the fact that much more of the Library and almost all of the Temple of Enlil still await the excavator's spade. No one can say for sure just what the future holds, but we are entitled to as much certainty as archaeological research will allow that if ever there was a site potentially rich in both inscriptional and cultural material, Nippur is that place. If this is merely a theory, future expeditions alone can supply the facts.