

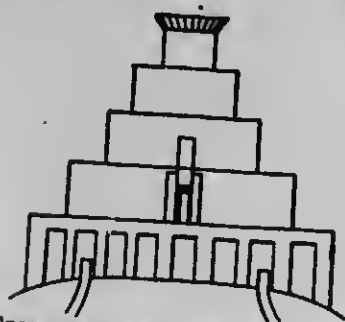
Their religion was a form of nature worship. Their supreme deities were the gods of the heaven, the earth, and the sea. Other objects of worship were the sun, the moon, and the several planets. Ishtar, who corresponded to the planet Venus, was the favourite goddess, and was sometimes called "the Queen of Babylon." Their temples (which were constructed of brick) were built in the form of towers, with a number of receding stories, reaching towards the sky. Upon the summit of the



BABYLONIAN GODDESS, ISHTAR
(From an Assyrian cylinder)

temple tower was an image of the god to whom the temple was dedicated. The temples were presided over by the priests, who, on account of their supposed nearness to the gods, were able to exercise a great influence over the people.

The Babylonians made considerable progress in the sciences, especially in astronomy and mathematics. They discovered the regular movements of the heavenly bodies. They marked out the constellations and the signs of the zodiac. They divided the year into months, weeks, days,



FORM OF THE TEMPLE TOWER

hours, minutes and seconds. They measured the hours of the day by the sundial, and the hours of the night by the water clock. In their mathematics they adopted the decimal notation; but they also introduced the "sexagesimal" system, that is, the system based on the number sixty, which we have inherited from them in our division of the hour and the minute into sixty parts. Besides acquiring considerable knowledge of mathematics they were the first to devise a regular system of weights and measures.

The progress made by the early Babylonians in architec-