

naturalists take to follow the lead of their professional brethren in nomenclatural questions (always reserving the "*Scomber scomber*" principle) the better it will be for all parties. The change is bound to come, and it may as well be accepted gracefully. In making a family "*Arvicolidae*," the author departs from all authority; and the adding of the name of its founder to each family and order of fishes is an unnecessary redundancy.

The volume is illustrated with several photogravures, all of which are excellent from an artistic point of view, while several afford interesting glimpses of local scenery. If it be regarded merely as a stepping-stone towards fuller treatment, the work may be welcomed as indicating the recognition of the importance of treatises on our local British faunas.

R. L.

THE AMERICAN EXCAVATIONS IN MESOPOTAMIA.

Nippur; or, Explorations and Adventures on the Euphrates. By J. P. Peters. Vol. i. pp. xvi + 375; vol. ii. pp. x + 420. (London: Putnam's Sons, 1897-98.)

THOSE who take an interest in Mesopotamian excavations, and in the building up of the history of the ancient empires which flourished in the land "between the two rivers" by means of almost undecipherable cuneiform documents, will welcome the appearance of Dr. Peters' volumes. We must, however, warn the reader that he is not to expect a thrilling narrative like that which the late Sir Henry Layard gave us in his "Nineveh and Babylon," and "Nineveh and its Remains," both of which works were published nearly forty-five years ago, and he is not to look out for vivid tales of the uncovering of the palaces of mighty kings in the presence of hundreds of wondering and enthusiastic natives, nor for anything of the kind. No Mesopotamian traveller can ever hope to attract the attention of the reading public as thoroughly as did Sir Henry Layard, for there is, unfortunately, no second Nineveh to "discover"; though, by the way, its site was not only never lost, but was thoroughly well known. Moreover, the reader must not expect from Dr. Peters a scientific work like Dr. Oppert's "*Expédition Scientifique en Mésopotamie*," the first part of which appeared in 1859, for the work which he undertook to do in Babylonia and Assyria was not on all-fours with that which the eminent French man of science was called upon to perform. Sir Henry Layard's want of knowledge of Assyrian was made up for by the possession of considerable skill in writing an easily read and popular account of his travels and works; in the early days of the science of Assyriology when he wrote, he was able to put forward theories which in subsequent years scholars like Sir Henry Rawlinson and Dr. Oppert were unable even to mention. Dr. Peters starts, of course, with much better equipment than any one of the three Mesopotamian explorers whose names we have mentioned, for he has all their experience to help him, and an enormous mass of archaeological facts, which have been heaped up by several workers, at his free disposal. Notwithstanding these advantages, his work is not a scientific exposition of the results obtained from the excavations by the expedition of which he was the director, nor is it a very readable popular story, interesting by reason of the personal details which it contains.

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His two volumes are well printed and very fairly illustrated, and they have maps, an index, appendices, &c. Dr. Peters must have given much time and attention to the work before us, and those who are able to wade through some hundreds of heavily-written pages will, of course, thank him for it. It is not our intention to discuss "Nippur" in detail, for many of the results obtained from the excavations carried on at the city of this name by Dr. Peters, and by his distinguished successor Mr. Haynes, have already been made known by Prof. Hilprecht; our object is only to call attention to the excellent work which the Americans have done by establishing a Consulate at Baghdad, and by systematically working through a site.

Just as England owes its unrivalled collections of Babylonian and Assyrian antiquities in the first instance to the private initiative of the British Ambassador at Constantinople about the year 1845, so the fine collections of inscribed tablets and other antiquities which America now possesses are due to the private enterprise of some of the principal citizens of Philadelphia. The American expedition was inaugurated by Mr. E. W. Clark, a leading banker of that city, and the scheme was adopted with great vigour and good-will by Dr. W. Pepper; other public-spirited men joined them, and their efforts have been crowned with such success that up to the present time nearly fifteen thousand pounds sterling have been expended by America on archaeological researches in Mesopotamia. The chief site of the work of the Americans was at Nippur or Niffer, a city which was situated about fifty miles to the south-east of Babylon, and was the centre of a great and flourishing civilisation some seven thousand years ago. Some of the early explorers had ascertained that the mounds which marked the site of the old city contained remains of buildings, inscribed tablets, &c., but the work of digging them out seriously did not begin until Dr. Peters and Mr. Haynes arrived on the scene. Dr. Peters toiled for several weeks at Niffer in 1891 and 1892, and succeeded in clearing out part of the great Temple of Bel, and in finding a large number of inscribed tablets; the two volumes before us deal practically with the results of his labours. In 1893 Mr. Haynes took over the work, and was so fortunate as to light upon a "find" of thousands of tablets, seals, and other important documents; he was also enabled to lay bare the ruins of the greater part of the ancient city and its temple in such a way that we are now able to understand the plan upon which an ancient pre-Babylonian city was arranged and built. Many tablets and other precious objects had, according to the terms of the agreement between the Ottoman Museum authorities and the Americans, to be sent to Constantinople; but we are glad to learn from Prof. Hilprecht's publications that a substantial number have been allowed to cross the Atlantic as a reward for the money and labour expended by the Americans at Niffer. It is to be hoped that copies of all such documents may be made available for scholars as soon as possible, and that other cuneiform experts in America will follow the example which Prof. Hilprecht has set them. Meanwhile it is to be hoped that a successor to Mr. Haynes and Dr. Peters has been found, and that a good work so well begun may be continued.