

cumbersomeness of having to use clay tablets for writing proved to be a great advantage for future generations, in that we can know the ordinary life of the people of Mesopotamia to an extent undreamed of in Egypt. While Mesopotamia lacks the great number of beautiful pictures in the tombs of the Egyptian nobles portraying so many details of common life, we have a far greater number of writings that deal with incidental matters.

B. Excavation in Mesopotamia.

1. History of Exploration and Excavation.

The cities of Mesopotamia were generally built on terraces made of bricks, and the walls were of the same material. In time some of the bricks deteriorated and covered the remains of cities that had been abandoned. Even in peacetime the cities tended to grow higher since refuse was generally thrown out into the streets. In case of war a city might be knocked down and left a ruin, and then eventually a new city might be built on top of it. Thus the cities grew higher, but in time most of the remains were so completely buried that as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, even the location of most of them was completely unknown.

Excavation began in 1842 with the work of a French vice-consul, T. E. Botta. He and others excavated in and around the site of Nineveh, the capital of the ancient Assyrian Empire, in the northern portion of Mesopotamia. Consequently the science of study of ancient Mesopotamia came to be called Assyriology, and this name was used for the entire subject until the twentieth century was well under way.

Soon after Botta began his work a young Englishman, A. H. Layard, began excavation at Nineveh. Layard showed remarkable ability at writing up the results of his work, and at highlighting its relation to the Bible. His accounts