

tablets fell to the floor and some of them were broken, but they retained their order in general. The top of the building fell upon them and served to protect them. The whole was covered with the sands of the desert and remained in this condition over two thousand years, until the British excavators discovered them and removed them to the British Museum.

Even at the present time there are still tablets of great value from the libraries of Assurbanipal which have not been read, although of course the greater number of them have been read in the eighty years that have intervened and those which have not been read have been glanced at and catalogued.

It is not always possible without a rather careful examination to tell the entire value of a tablet. Even within the last twenty years, a tablet was discovered among these old tablets from Nineveh in the British Museum which threw a new light upon the events of the fall of Nineveh. Its publication proved of epoch making importance in our understanding of the history of those days and led a great German scholar to remark that excavations in the British Museum seemed now to be of even more value than excavations in Babylonia itself.

Naturally, the great amount of the material which was brought from the excavations soon went way beyond what could be immediately interpreted. In about 1855, interest in excavations waned. Scholars had work cut out for them for many years in reading and studying the material that had already been excavated and for almost twenty years, nothing more was done in the excavation of Mesopotamia.

The next interest in Mesopotamian excavation was aroused through the activities of a young man named George Smith. In 1866 he applied to Sir Henry Rawlinson for permission to study the original