

BOOK NOTICES.

The Antiquities of Tennessee and the Adjacent States, and the State of Aboriginal Society in the Scale of Civilization Represented by Them. A Series of Historical and Ethnological Studies. By Gates P. Thruston. Cincinnati: Robert Clarke & Co., 1890. 8vo, cl., xv, 369 pp., 18 pl. and 246 fig.

Between two and three years ago an ancient cemetery was discovered at Brown's creek, which is about five miles from Nashville. The locality is interesting to the historian as the scene of General George H. Thomas's famous victory, known as the battle of Nashville. The exploration of the ground was entrusted to the Tennessee Historical Society, and General Gates P. Thruston, their corresponding secretary, himself an archæologist and collector, has made known the results of his careful study of the locality in the handsome volume which bears his name. It must not be supposed that General Thruston's book is merely a description of a "local find," for his researches have extended to the great collections of the country, and he has endeavored to give a comparative view of the whole question of the prehistoric Indian in the Mississippi valley, and it is evident from his frequent quotations that he is familiar with the views of prominent anthropologists.

The discoveries made in middle Tennessee, as set forth in General Thruston's work, may be concisely summarized as follows: The mound-builders (for it is convenient to preserve that appellation) were spread throughout the entire State, and corresponding relics of their work are to be found in adjoining States. Their largest settlement seems to have been on Brown's creek. No vestiges remain of houses or habitations of any kind, excepting what Professor Putnam calls "the living line," which indicates by its débris where the walls of the dwelling once stood, but the silent record, which tells with marvelous fullness what these people were, is to be found in their stone graves. Over 3,000 of these graves were found in the cemetery on Brown's creek and 1,000 at a spot not far distant. General Thruston makes this startling assertion: "It is within the bounds of truth to state that after a century of occupation by

the whites the burial grounds of the aboriginal inhabitants within a radius of thirty miles from the center contained a greater number of graves than the aggregate of the present cemeteries of the whites within the same limits."

The Tennessee stone graves exhibit a remarkable variety in their contents, and the pottery in particular is, in many instances, of graceful shape and intricate pattern. Upon the whole, judging from the illustrations which copiously adorn the book, it may be said that the work of the prehistoric people of middle Tennessee shows an advancement in the arts not excelled by that of any other people of their race. General Thruston is very careful to state not only what has been found in these ancient burial places, but also what is entirely absent. After stating that no implements of iron, either in its crude or manufactured state, nor of lead have been found, though a few articles of hammered copper or silver have been discovered, he goes on to say: "No writing or intelligible inscription indicating a written language or decipherable symbol language, no pictograph or tablet or inscription in the higher grades of hieroglyphic writing, no cloth or fabric of the finer grades of manufacture, no piece of regular masonry or of well-built stone wall, or house, or house foundation of stone, or walled well, or house or wall of brick, or remains of architecture worthy of the name have been found in all the vast territory of the Mississippi valley."

It would be better, perhaps, if this very sweeping assertion had been guarded by more precise specification; but if it be borne in mind that reference is intended to the *highest* type possible for comparison—the rectangular bricks and squared stone walls of southern Mexico, for example, in the matter of masonry—then the statement is essentially true.

This decisive statement, modified even as the foregoing remarks seem to require, leads naturally to the most interesting part of the whole subject.

General Thruston, like most American anthropologists, has given up the theory that the mound-builders were men of a superior race, belonging to a lost civilization, but regards them as being in nowise different ethnically from the Indians who inhabited North America at the time of the Columbian discovery. Nevertheless, he seems to be puzzled how to explain the marked superiority of the implements and ornaments found in the stone graves of Tennessee to those pro-

duced by the Shawnees and Cherokees, for example, the supposed modern exemplars of the mound-builders of that region. He points particularly to the gorgets and other shell-work which form a part either of his own collection or of the collections in the museums to which he has had access, and doubts whether anything of equal fineness of workmanship has been produced by Indians within historic times.

The question must be looked at from a higher plane. It would seem probable that at the time of the discovery of America the native Indian, nomad or mound-builder, but especially the latter, had attained to the zenith of his proficiency in the arts. The advent of the white man's civilization was fatal to its progress or even continuance. The history of the world is full of such instances, and it may be laid down as an axiom that when a lower and a superior art come in contact, the former will be displaced by the latter and will gradually disappear. In the words of a careful observer: "The introduction of the brass and iron kettle sounded the death knell of the Indian's skill as a potter."*

Now the difficulty with many explorers is that they compare the productions of the most advanced Indian culture—those, for instance, of the mound-builders, so called—with the degenerated work of historic Indians even of a quite recent existence. This has led, on the one hand, to romantic stories of a great race far superior to the Indian, who built fortifications, temples, and other notable works, and then mysteriously vanished from the continent. On the other hand, as there is no zeal like that of the iconoclast, those explorers whose diligent research and keen insight have cleared away these fanciful imaginings have gone, in some instances, to the opposite extreme, and, in their determination to see nothing but "post-Columbian Indian" in it all, have unwittingly, perhaps, depreciated the artistic value of the relics of the mounds.

The ancient inhabitants of central Tennessee were evidently a settled race. They constructed houses, villages, cemeteries, mounds, and had attained to marked excellency in the making of implements and ornaments. Their work should be compared not with that of

*The process of supplantation is still to be observed. Not long since the writer of this article received a set of beautifully finished "gambling sticks" made by the Hoopa Indians in California. His correspondent stated that they would soon become scarce, and the art of preparing them would probably be lost, as the Indians were learning to use the white man's playing-cards.

the wild tribes, their possible descendants, but, for example, with that of the settled tribes of the lower Mississippi, the Adaizes and Natchez, who are pretty fairly described by the early French writers, and who seem in many respects to have resembled the mound-builders of the upper regions. They were, to some extent, an agricultural people, as we know from the chronicles referred to, which also abound in notices of the extensive traffic which prevailed among the tribes encountered in the valley of the Mississippi.

General Thruston's book is throughout modest in tone, and from its evident honesty of purpose and careful description is entitled to be regarded as one of the most valuable contributions to the archæology of the North American Indian which has appeared. The book has been handsomely gotten up by the publishers and the illustrations have been even lavishly supplied.

ROBERT FLETCHER.

Races and Peoples: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography. By Daniel G. Brinton, A. M., M. D. New York, 1890, N. D. C. Hodges. 313 pp., 8 figs., 9 schemes, 6 charts, 12mo.

This volume is a collection of ten lectures delivered at the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, in the spring of 1890, by Dr. Brinton, professor of ethnology in the Academy and of American archæology and linguistics in the University of Pennsylvania. If we are not mistaken, this is the first attempt by an institution of higher learning in our country to found a professorship of anthropology.

The author shows on every page an immense amount of research and an excellent acquaintance with the latest investigators. He has brought together a body of information which lies beyond the reach of most intelligent readers and teachers. The first two lectures are concerned with physical ethnography, the remainder with the problem of race and races. From beginning to end the volume forms an excellent text-book.

What gives it a flavor of its own, its bouquet, is Dr. Brinton's theory of origins. Accepting the theories of the evolutionists and the monogenists as the most plausible in the present state of science, the author devotes the greater part of his argument to the home of man primeval. This must be looked for (1) where the oldest relics