

TIFLIS AND BAKU.

AFTER having laboriously waded through half a dozen of the ponderous tomes with which English travellers—and American too, for that matter—conscientiously afflict mankind, it is really a pleasure to take up this light, and we fear ephemeral, narrative of the exploits of Mr. Orsolle. To be sure, there are few dates and no statistics in the volume. Neither are there any pictures, not even a portrait of the author. There is a map, but as it was evidently drawn to illustrate a condition of affairs considerably anterior to our author's journey, and as no attempt seems to have been made to adapt it to the book it accompanies, it is of little use; nevertheless, it is a good map, in its way, and, a few years ago, might have been regarded with a more favorable eye.

It was in July, 1882, that Orsolle said good-by to his mother, and made the best of his way to the 'gare du nord,' where his travelling companion, M. Ad. Nihlein joined him. Thence by Cracow, Odessa, and Sebastopol, he proceeded to Poti, where he arrived on the 14th of August. From Poti, at that time the Black-Sea terminus of the Caucasus railway, he journeyed to Tiflis. His description of the latter place occupies a dozen pages, and will well repay a cursory perusal. At Tiflis he left the railroad, and travelled in the manner of the country, which he found much more agreeable than did O'Donovan, to Kars, the ruins of the ancient city of Ani, of which a plan is given, and Erivan. Thence, by a route not to be traced on the 'Carte pour le voyage de M. Orsolle,' he found his way to the Tiflis-Baku railway, and eventually to the Caspian itself.

There are many descriptions of Baku in the books, but none so interesting as this. M. Orsolle does not tell us how many gallons of oil are refined per hour, nor does he go into the details of the use of the refuse products of that distillation on the Caspian steamers. He gives no information on such points; but he does tell us what Baku is like, who its denizens are, and how they eat, drink, play, bathe, and exist. We say exist, because, judging from this description, it is a bare existence that the Bakunians lead in their naphtha-soaked town, which, he says, is destined to become the Marseilles of the Caspian.

The remainder of the book is devoted to Teheran and north-western Persia, and possesses no especial interest at the present time.

Le Caucase et la Perse. Par E. ORSOLLE. Paris, Plon, 1885.

NOTES AND NEWS.

THE following is a complete list of the papers read at the meeting of the National academy of sciences, April 21–24:—J. S. Billings and Dr. Matthews, U.S.A., Methods of measuring the cubic capacity of crania; S. H. Scudder, Winged insects from a paleontological point of view; A. S. Packard, The Syncarida, a hitherto undescribed group of extinct malacostracous Crustacea, The Gampsonychidae, an undescribed family of fossil schizopod Crustacea, The Anthracaridae, a family of carboniferous macrurous decapod Crustacea, allied to the Eryonidae; Alexander Agassiz, The coral reefs of the Sandwich Islands, The origin of the fauna and flora of the Sandwich Islands; T. Sterry Hunt, The classification of natural silicates; Elias Loomis, The cause of the progressive movement of areas of low pressure; C. B. Comstock, The ratio of the metre to the yard; C. H. F. Peters, An account of certain stars observed by Flamsteed, supposed to have disappeared; J. E. Hilgard and A. Lindenkohl, The submarine geology of the approaches to New York; Theodore Gill, The orders of fishes; J. W. Powell, The organization of the tribe; G. W. Hill, On certain lunar inequalities due to the action of Jupiter, and discovered by Mr. E. Neison, E. D. Cope, The pretertiary Vertebrata of Brazil, The phylogeny of the placental Mammalia; C. A. Young, Some recent observations upon the rotation and surface-markings of Jupiter; H. A. Rowland, On the value of the ohm; F. A. Genth and Gerhard vom Rath, On the vanadium minerals—vanadinite, endlicheite, and descloizite—and on iodyrite, from the Sierra Grande Mine, Lake Valley, N. Mex.; A. N. Skinner (by invitation), On the total solar eclipse of Aug. 28, 1886; Theodore Gill and John A. Ryder, The evolution and homologies of the flukes of cetaceans and sirenians; Ira Remsen, Chemical action in a magnetic field; A. Graham Bell, The measurement of hearing-power; A. Graham Bell and F. Della Torre, On the possibility of obtaining echoes from ships and icebergs in a fog. The following biographical notices of deceased members were also presented: of Dr. J. J. Woodward, U.S.A., by J. S. Billings; of Gen. A. A. Humphreys, U.S.A., by H. L. Abbot; and of William Stimpson, by Theodore Gill.

—At a recent meeting of the Bavarian geographical society, Professor Rutzel communicated some particulars concerning a map which he is designing to show the political circumstances of Africa; the actual limits of the various states, native and other, being defined according to the extent of the territories actually possessed by each. The map will show several 'centres' of state formation. The whole of the continent is, however, far from being divided amongst the existing tribes, as there are many districts which do not belong to any of them. The existing native states, moreover, such as the Sunda and the Zulu kingdoms, are of varying importance, and subject to very different systems. The native states, it is asserted, rest mainly on the boundary between the Sahara and the Sudan, the high plateau of east Africa, and the Guinea coast. The remain-