

[1888-12-29. *Newspaper article, New York Times. UPMAA_Nippur_01.07, 3-4. PO*]

Since his return to his post at Constantinople, Minister Oscar S. Straus has not only been honored with unusual attentions from the Sultan, who entertained our representative at dinner at the imperial palace, with a distinguished company of some forty or more Pashas, and a theatrical performance following the feast, but he has succeeded in obtaining from the Sultan for an American company of archaeologists a favor that has been vainly sought for by the representatives of several of the European powers. Through Mr. Straus's personal appeals to the Sultan his Majesty was led to grant to the party from the University of Pennsylvania sent out by the Babylonian Exploration Fund subscribers an irade giving permission to make archæological excavations for a period of two years in the village [*sic*] of Bagdad, in the ruins of ancient Babylon [*sic*]. It required much perseverance and management to get the permission, as the privilege to make excavations is very jealously guarded. Although applications for similar privileges have been made for the British museums and German societies they have not yet succeeded in obtaining them. Formerly it was different, but for eight years or more a strict prohibitory law, similar to that prevailing in Greece, has absolutely shut the door against all foreigners seeking to acquire or export antiquities. The American expedition, under the leadership of the Rev. John P. Peters, left Constantinople on Dec. 1 for Bagdad to begin work upon the excavations.

The expedition sent out by the University of Pennsylvania was the second of the kind to start from the United States, unless the Wolfe expedition of 1884-5, which could not obtain permission to make explorations, and consequently did nothing, is left out of consideration. The expenses of the expedition are to be paid by the citizens of Philadelphia, and the fund placed at the disposal of the organization having it in charge secures the services of eminent scholars. Besides Dr. Peters, who is Director, there are attached to the expedition Dr. Hilprecht of the University of Pennsylvania, and Dr. Harper of Yale, Assyriologists, Mr. P.H. Field of Brooklyn, Mr. P. [*sic*] H. Haynes, photographer, Mr. J.D. Prince, and a physician.

The Director was unable, at the time he started for Bagdad, to say when work would begin. He hoped to be able to work at several spots over the sites of the cities of the densely populated district between the Tigris and the Euphrates. The flat country is dotted with mounds, each indicating the remains of an ancient city, any one of which would probably yield interesting results if explored. The expedition was delayed at Constantinople, probably owing to the difficulty of securing the Sultan's permission to begin work. It was expected when the party left New-York in June last that it would rendezvous in Aleppo about the close of September, and go by horseback to Bagdad. It has lost about three months of time, but that will be regarded as of small consequence compared with the boon of prosecuting the work with imperial consent.