

scriptions of the species which fell under his notice with illustrative figures of considerable accuracy. His "Historia Naturale," of which De Blainville assuredly speaks in very exaggerating terms when he represents it as one of the most important works in the history of zoophytology, was printed at Naples in 1599; but although reprinted some years afterwards (1672), the book, and the knowledge it contained, had sunk into such complete oblivion, that when Peyssonnel, in the year 1727, communicated the same discovery to the Academy of Sciences in Paris, it was received by the members of that learned body in a manner which is sufficient to convince us that it was entirely new to them, and exposed the author to the obloquy and censure which are the usual portions of an original discoverer.

Some time previously to the publication of Peyssonnel's discovery, those who maintained that the stony zoophytes were plants had received a strong corroboration of their opinion from the researches of Count Marsigli, who, having detected the existence of polypes in coral and madrepore, had, under the influence of the fashionable theory, described them as being literally their blossoms or flowers.* Peyssonnel, therefore, had to contend not only against the prejudices of the vulgar based on appearances which spoke direct to the outward sense, but against the actual observations of a naturalist of acknowledged merit; and the observations of Peyssonnel, although numerous and unequivocal, were yet mixed up with so much that was fanciful or erroneous, that it is not wonderful his opinion was received with coldness and suspicion. Reaumur, to whom Peyssonnel's communication was intrusted, even concealed the name of the

rod and directing the attention of two wondering visitors to the more remarkable of them, while a third leans against a cabinet, and surveys,

"——— not without much content

"Its many singularities."

The book contains besides many wood-cuts of a miscellaneous kind, very tolerably engraved for the age. The Zoophytes figured belong chiefly to the Lithophyta, with some Sponges and Aleyonia. The opinions of Rumphius seem to have been as explicitly stated as those of Imperato, but they effected nothing.—Pall. Elench. 14, and 275.

* "Ce fut une découverte qui fit grand bruit dans le monde naturaliste, que celle des fleurs du corail." Reaumur.—Marsigli's work was published in 1711. His name is sometimes written *Marsilli*.—For an account of his works see Haller, Bib. Bot. i. 630.