ANCIENT AMERICA.

Supposed to Have Been Atlantis, a Powerful Empire.

According to an Egyptian Legend the Whole Continent Was Engulfed in the Sea by a Convulsion of Nature.

In a volume entitled "The Lost Atlantis," by the late Sir Daniel Wilson, president of the university of Toronto, an interesting study is made of the legends which suggest that America was known to the ancients. In two of Plato's dialogues, the Timaeus and Critias, it is related that Solon, the great Athenian law-giver, during a visit he made to Sais, in Egypt, some thirty-four hundred years ago, was informed by the priests of the former existence, west of the strait of Gibraltar, of an island continent in the Atlantic ocean, says the Baltimore Sun. This continent, Atlantis, the seat of a powerful empire, according to the story, was engulfed in the sea by some convulsion of nature, with the result, of course, of destroying its hundreds of cities and millions of inhabitants. Already in Solon's time the destruction of Atlantis was described as a remote event, "white with age."

Has this legend a basis of fact? It cannot be accepted as a whole, it appears, because the Atlantic, in the opinion of geologists, has been substantially what it is for many millions of years. Geology shows evidences of local upheavals, but none of the submergence of extensive continental areas. Sir Daniel accordingly feels compelled to reject the sinking of Atlantis as a detail of the story invented to account for the cessation of intercourse with it. The body of the story he is disposed to accept. Atlantis was America, which continent the earlier Egyptians had discovered during their period of adventurous maritime enterprise. There are many evidences of Egyptian domination through the Mediterranean before the Trojan war. Their ships sailed the Atlantic, visiting England for tin and exploring the coast of Africa toward and beyond the equator in search of gold. Their vessels might readily have been carried westward by ocean currents to Brazil and Central America. In the year 1500 of our era Pedro Alvares de Cabral, the Portuguese admiral, while sailing southward along the west coast of Africa, was carried by the equatorial current so far out of his course that he accidentally discovered Brazil. What befell the Portuguese admiral in 1500 might readily, Sir Daniel thinks, have befallen Egyptian admirals thousands of years before. Egypt when first revealed to us in history was already far gone in its decline. Its people had lost the spirit which impelled them to their first discoveries and to their acquisition of the greatest if not the first of the ancient empires.

Sir Daniel affirms that the ancient maritime races of the Orient frequently made voyages far out into the Atlantic. In the reign of Pharaoh-Necho, 611—603 B. C., after the decline of Egyptian maritime enterprise, a Phoenician fleet was employed to circumnavigate Africa. Hanno, the Carthaginian, is said to have reached the Indian ocean by the route around the cape, as Vasco de Gama did later, in 1497. Enterprise has its pulsations—its periods of expansion and contraction. There are, it is seen, indications that the discovery of America was within the reach of the Egyptians at the period to which the story of Atlantis refers.

When the Egyptians ceased to rove the sea Atlantis was lost to view at Sais and became a dim legend. Evidences of Egyptian intercourse with it are to be sought, according to the author, among the ruined cities of Central America. Such evidences may yet be forthcoming. "It would not," he says, "in any degree surprise me to learn of the discovery of a genuine Phoenician or other inscription or some hoard of Assyrian gryphons or shekels of the merchant princes of Tyre, 'that had knowledge of the sea,' being recovered among the still unexplored treasures of the buried empire of Montezuma or the long-deserted ruins of Central America. Such a discovery would scarcely be more surprising than that of the Punic hoards found at Corvo, the most westerly island of the Azores. Yet it would furnish a substantial basis for the legend of Atlantis. There is nothing improbable in the idea that it rests on some historic basis in which the fall of an Iberian or other aggressive power in the western Mediterranean has mingled with other and equally vague traditions of intercourse with a vast continent lying beyond the pillars of Hercules." The speculation is an attractive one and adds interest to the study of the antiquities of Central America.

AN ODD PROFESSION.

Good Incomes Are Earned by Finding Lost Articles in Shops.

Few women shoppers in their rush for bargains stop to think of the number of things that are lost by that great army of bargain hunters every day. Pushing and pulling at each other as they do in their attempts to get near some special bargain, the unnoticed dropping of a handkerchief, pocketbook or fan is a common occurrence, according to the New York World.

The manager of a big store on Sixth avenue says there is a regular company of women who do nothing else but patrol the stores on the lookout for articles and money lost by shoppers.

Most of these women, he says, are well known to the floor-walkers and detectives, but as they break no laws and occasionally make small purchases they are not molested.

At six o'clock each night, according to his story, or when they meet at their "office" and make a general division of their spoils, to the unique band it is no uncommon thing to divide one hundred dollars worth of goods as the proceeds of a day's persistent search.

Of course they closely examine the personal columns of the papers, and if a large enough reward is offered the persons who lose things stand a pretty good chance of having them returned.

THIS EARTH OF OURS.

Its Age According to the Researches of Geologists.

Geologists have ascertained that the rate at which erosion takes place can be measured; by applying their scale to the sedimentary rocks they have formed a hypothesis as to the time which has elapsed since erosion began.

The stratified rocks attain an average thickness of 100,000 feet. The material of which they consist was all washed down from high planes, deposited and left to stratify. By the inspection of river banks it is found that in places the surface of the land which has been carried down as sediment in rivers has been reduced at the rate of a foot in 730 years, while in other places, where the land was more stubborn or less flexible, it had taken 6,800 years to lower the surface one foot. The deposit must be equal to the denudation.

We find that while some of the sedimentary rocks have grown a foot in 730 years others have taken 6,800 years to rise that height. Thus the period of time that was required to build up 100,000 feet of sedimentary rock has varied according to locality from 73,000,000 to 680,000,000 years. It follows that the active work of creation lasted for a cycle intermediate between these two figures. The cycle varied with endless succession of periods of disturbance by volcanic force and glacial action, and the frequent submersion of dry land, alternating with the emerging of continents out of the seas. These may have retarded the growth of sedimentary rocks, but they cannot have accelerated it.

A study of fossils teaches the steady uniformity with which the work of creation proceeded. Since man began to observe there has been no change in the forms of animal and vegetable life. A few species have disappeared—not one new species has been evolved. Not only do we find the fauna and flora of ancient Egypt as depicted on monuments which are probably 8,000 or 10,000 years old identical with those which are found in that country to-day, but shells which inhabited our seas before the ice age and grew in an ocean whose bed overlay the Rocky mountains are precisely the same species that are found in the bay of Monterey and the waters of the Chesapeake. It is evident that there has been no essential change in the conditions of life since these animals and these vegetables were first created, yet how vast the shortest period which we can assign to the gap that divides us from that remote epoch!

A LAWYER'S STORY.

The Peculiar Mistake Made by a Telegrapher.

A party of newspaper men and lawyers were discussing amusing typographical errors, when a veteran New York attorney told of a peculiar mistake that had come under his notice, made by a telegraph operator.

"I was a young man at that time," said the lawyer, "and had a small office across the hall from a successful attorney who once in awhile befriended me. One day I was sitting in my office with my legs on the table and chair tilted back, waiting for clients and dreaming of a sweet girl known to me as Ella, who had been the sweetheart of my college days the year before. I was startled from my reverie by a boy with a message directed to me. It was from my friend across the way and dated Chicago, but its contents made my brain whirl. With telegraphic brevity it said: 'Ella is sweet. Don't delay. Take it up and try it.' I was just considering the advisability of a proposal, and my astonishment can be imagined. My first impressions were that I was either asleep or the 'Windy City' had driven my friend insane. But there was the messenger boy, so I read the telegram upside down, sideways, and everyway I could see it, and the light finally dawned on me. I took up a court calendar. There it was: 'Ella vs. Sweet,' and my friend was named as the defendant's attorney."

GROWTH OF THE HAIR.

How It Is Promoted or Retarded by Certain Kinds of Diet.

The influence of diet upon the growth of hair is the subject of a paper in which, according to the Washington Star, the writer says: Several cases of shedding of hair after influenza has confirmed my opinion that diet has much to do with the production and with the cure of sympathetic alopecia. Hair contains five per cent. of sulphur, and its ash twenty per cent. of silicon and ten per cent. of iron and manganese.

Solution of beef (or, rather, part of it), starchy mixtures and even milk, which constitute the diet of patients with influenza and other fevers, cannot supply these elements, and atrophy at the roots and falling out of hair result.

The color and strength of hair in young mammals is not attained so long as milk is the sole food. As to drugs, iron has prompt influence. The foods which most abundantly contain the above-named elements are the various albumenoids and the oat, the ash of the grain yielding twenty-two per cent. of silicon.

I have often found a dietary largely composed of oatmeal and brown bread to greatly promote the growth of hair, especially when the baldness was preceded by constipation and sluggish capillary circulation. Those races of men who consume most meat are the most hirsute.

A Valuable Dog.

It is told in an English religious journal that a clergyman recently officiated for a brother clergyman. Being anxious to know what impression he had made, he asked the clerk: "Was my discourse pitched in too high a key? I hope I did not shoot over the heads of the people." "No, you didn't do that, sir." "Was it a suitable theme?" asked the clergyman. "Yes, it was about right." "Was it too long?" "No, but it was long enough." "I am glad of that, for, to tell you the truth, the other day, as I was getting this sermon ready my dog destroyed four or five pages, and that has made it much shorter." "Oh, sir," said the clerk, "could you let our vicar have a pup o' that 'ere dog?"

ECHO RIVER.

Peculiar Acoustic Qualities of This Vaulted Stream.

One of the famous curiosities of the Mammoth cave is the Echo river, a body of water estimated to be some three-fourths of a mile in length, and from twenty to two hundred feet in breadth. Its depth at ordinary times is from ten to forty feet. Dr. H. C. Hovey, in a paper read before the American Geographical society, gives a vivid description of the peculiar acoustic qualities of the vault by which the river is arched.

Last summer, in company with a party of four persons, no others being on the river at the time, we tried the effect of rocking the boat as violently as we dared to do, also striking the surface of the water with our paddles, and in other ways making as much agitation of the body of the stream as possible, and then awaiting the result in silence.

I timed the concert thus created, and found its duration to be exactly half an hour. First came sounds like the tinkling of silver bells. Then larger and heavier bells took up the melody as the waves sought out the cavities in the walls. Then it was as if all chimes of all cathedrals had conspired to raise a tempest of sweet sounds.

For a moment there was utter silence, soon broken by low mutterings, ghostly whispers, sudden shrieks, as if of men in agony. Then silence again. We were about to speak, when the guide motioned to us to remain quiet; when, lo! as from some deep recess, hitherto forgotten, came a tone tender and profound; after which, like gentle memories, all the mellow and mysterious sounds that had gone before were reawakened, until the hall rang again with the wondrous harmony.

STRANGE ADOPTIONS.

The Strength of the Maternal Instinct in Animals.

I lately met some friends who had with them a little dog called "Vic" which had adopted the family of a cat in the house, and while in possession would not let the mother come near her kittens, says a writer in the London Spectator. The kittens were kept in a very tall basket, and "Vic" would take them one by one and then carry them into the garden and watch over them, carrying them back in the same way after a time, at other times lying contentedly with them in the basket. Of course, "Vic" had to be forcibly removed when the adopted family required their mother's attention for their sustenance. I also have met a friend who saw a hen hawk, which was in a cage, mothering a young starling. Three young, unfledged starlings were given the hawk to eat. She ate two and then brooded the other and took the utmost care of it. Unhappily the young starling died, and from that moment the hawk would touch no food, but died herself in a few days. The same friend was on a mountain one day when a sheep came up to him and unmistakably begged him to follow her, going just in front and continually looking around to see if he was following. The sheep led him at last to some rocks, where he found a lamb fast wedged in between two pieces of rock. He was able to liberate the lamb, to the evident joy of the mother. I myself once saw a cat "brooding" and taking care of a very small chicken, which, being hatched first of a brood, had been brought into a cottage and placed in a basket near the fire. It managed to get out of the basket and hopped up near the cat, which immediately adopted it.

SHOES IN JAPAN.

They Are Made of Straw for Both Men and Horses.

In the land of the Mikado, if nowhere else on earth, man and beast wear shoes made of the same material—to-wit, straw. One would naturally not think that straw would make very good shoes to be worn even by man, and worn, too, in the most gingerly fashion. Certainly they would not be very durable to the average boy, who can "kick the stuffing" out of school shoes in a few brief weeks.

How then can it be expected that they would do horses any reasonable service at all? Well, they don't; they wear out so fast and have to be replaced so often that anyone going for a long drive will have to carry about a cartload of them along. So often do the horses' shoes have to be changed that the people have come to do so at pretty regular intervals when on a trip, and distance has come to be measured by the length of road a set of shoes will last. In the parlance of the country, one does not travel so many miles, but so many sets of shoes. When you ask a native how far it is to any given place he will reply so many sets of shoes. We don't know that such is the fact, but probably when the horses are done with their old shoes they eat them.

BAD HABIT OF EXERCISE.

A London Critic Says One May Become a Slave to It for Life.

Some persons get on perfectly well without exercise. I am one of them, says the editor of London Truth, because I never fell into the engrossing habit of exercise when a young man. Naturally a person who passes his youth in violent exercise finds later on that he cannot do without it. The habit is as easily acquired as that of drinking or opium smoking, and, once acquired, a person becomes a slave to it for the rest of his life.

Most people, however, eat far too much, and then often find themselves incommoded, if they do not work off this excess of food. It is easy to get up an artificial appetite. I remember Mr. Bright once explained this to me. He said the stomach is artificially distended, the void which is created owing to this artificial distension produces a perpetual craving for food, and this is termed being hungry. Gradually reduce the amount of food, and the stomach becomes normal, with the result that half the amount of food is satisfying. The world is divided between those who eat too much and those who do not have enough to eat.

A HOTEL INCIDENT.

The Traveler Who Was Mistaken for a Dead Man.

"The most singular thing that ever happened to me at a hotel," said the traveling member of the club, according to the Detroit Free Press, "was this: I was stopping over night at a large hotel in Chicago, and retiring late I left word to be called in the morning. I intended getting up in time for a late breakfast.

"I was awakened by a knocking at the door of the room next to mine, mysterious whisperings and orders given in a suppressed voice. I lay still, wondering what time it was, and whether I should get up or not, when there came a loud racket against my door, and a sound of the transom moving. I sat up—my bed being close by the door—in time to see a small boy backing in over the transom. Hanging full length, he held by his hands and then dropped to the floor. As he gained his feet he turned toward the bed, and, seeing me sitting up and looking at him, he gave a yell that made my blood thrill.

"'Open the door,' commanded a man's voice on the outside.

"'He's a-l-i-v-e,' yelled the boy, sprawling on the floor in abject terror.

"I thought everybody was crazy as I heard the noise outside, and, unlocking my door, I asked what was the matter. The hall was full of chambermaids, bell boys and porters, all of whom took to their heels as soon as they saw me, and ran as if possessed with demons.

"The landlord and one of the clerks came up to explain matters, which they did quite smilingly. It was a slight mistake, that was all; they had mistaken my room for the one next door, where a man had killed himself the previous night. They had looked in at his transom, and seen that he was dead, but when the boy came up with a stepladder to climb in and unlock the door they had helped him into my room by mistake. That was all."

HE LIKED FISH.

Sam Wanted a Whale and Nothing Short of It.

A party of young men who were on a fishing excursion on the Ohio river some years ago were joined by an eccentric man, skilled as a fisherman, known in that region as "Barefooted Sam." He was a good cook, and made himself useful in so many ways that his presence, though uninvited, was tolerated by the amateur sportsmen.

One morning two members of the party returned to camp with their appetites well sharpened for breakfast, and were greeted enthusiastically by a third man, who said: "You just come along and see the finest baked perch you ever laid eyes on."

They hurried to the table, but saw only a rick of bones, from which every fiber of meat had been taken. Sam was nowhere to be seen. When he returned no comments were made upon the circumstance; but in the afternoon, when the company were lounging on the bank, Sam drawled out:

"I'd like to have all the fish I could eat, jest onst. I aint had a mess sence Pete Follet ketched that big catfish, three years back."

"Sam," remarked one of the group, dryly, "I thought you had quite a fair mess this morning. That perch weighed about ten pounds, I've been informed."

"Oh, yes," replied Sam, with no sign of embarrassment on his placid countenance, "I ate that; but what I mean is a reel, reg'lar mess!"

The company pondered on this remarkable statement in absolute silence for some moments, until at last the man who had caught the perch ejaculated: "Well, I snum!" and nothing more was said.

COMPETITION AVOIDED.

Shops in France Not Allowed to Crowd Each Other.

In France two shops selling the same thing are not allowed to exist within a certain area. In provisions this absence of competition materially increases the price, but, says a woman who has large experience in housekeeping in France, your taxes are less, and you have in return clean streets, good gas, constant water supply and perfect sewerage. In addition, by virtue of state supervision, you never receive short weight or inferior goods. There is no quantity so small that the grocer will not sell it. And in doing this and in delivering it he is as scrupulously polite and careful as in buying larger amounts. The butcher is the cook's friend and will trim the meat and take out the bones with loving care. Meat is dear. Good beefsteak costs from thirty-seven cents to fifty cents a pound. Fish is very expensive, but poultry is reasonable and good and comparatively cheap. A good deal of cooking in small households is done with gas, and gas stoves are loaned by the gas companies for this purpose. Sugar, matches and all imported articles are dear, owing to the high tariff. The lowest price for servants is ten dollars a month. Charwomen ask six cents by the hour. Englishwomen say that life on the continent is much more agreeable for Americans than for themselves, owing to the fact that in each consular town the consul and his family make a nucleus for a colony, which soon gathers about them.

Glass Eyes Worn Secretly.

A New York optician, was relating to a party of friends the other day some of the peculiar features of his trade. "You would be surprised," he said, "at the large number of locomotive engineers and firemen who have glass eyes. Of course, an engineer could not hold a place on a railroad an hour if the fact that he had a glass eye was known to his superior officers. Consequently men in that line of business exercise the utmost secrecy with regard to their infirmity. When they come into my store to buy a new glass eye or have some flaw in their old one attended to they beg the privilege of transacting their business in my private office, and they usually slip in and out of the store when no other customer is around."

QUEER PHENOMENON.

An Explanation of Florida's Curious Spider-Web Rain.

A subscriber living in Gainesville, Fla., sends to the Scientific American for identification a white thread-like substance which he states fell to the earth in large quantities during a rain on September 20. A sample of the material had already been forwarded by another person to the Smithsonian institution and was thence sent to Dr. George Marx, of the department of agriculture, who makes the following report:

"The sample of a white substance which fell in large quantities in Gainesville, Fla., has been handed me by the botanist of this department for examination.

"This very interesting material is without doubt a product of the spinning glands of a spider, or rather thousands of spiders. The chemical reagencies prove it is not a vegetable matter, but animal, and the fact that strands can be dissolved almost infinitely into minute threads, and further, the great length of the strands, hundreds of yards, causes the inference that only a spider could manufacture it.

"The species of this spider is unknown to me, but it is not improbable that it might be a Nephila, a very large orb weaver, which abounds in the southern part of the United States and the West Indies.

"The young spiders of many genera avail themselves of their spinning products to migrate from their birthplace by floating through the air to localities at a great distance. Should rain moisten these weavings, the spider web becomes too heavy to float in the air, and sticking together in great masses, falls from above.

"A similar occurrence was reported to me from Vallicita, Calaveras county, Cal., November 16, 1891. It has occurred there for the last four years in October and November."

This is the first time this phenomenon has occurred in the south. The web is perfectly white and appears to be a mixture of silk and cotton, but mostly silk.

A DIFFICULT FEAT.

To Catch a Ball Dropped from a Height of Five Hundred Feet.

A few years ago—in 1884, I believe—several well-known baseball players attempted the impossible feat of catching and holding a regulation Spalding dropped from the top of Washington's monument, says the St. Louis Republic. The experiment was tried by Trott, Hines, Baker, Snyder and several lesser lights in the fraternity, but none of them succeeded in holding it or even materially checking its progress to the ground. The men named above were all experts at their trades, but it is evident that they gave their sports more attention than they did their philosophy during their school days, otherwise they would have known that a body dropped from such a height would be traveling with a speed of 187 feet per second at the time of its contact with the earth. The reason why no living man could catch and hold a ball traveling with such velocity in plain enough by making some hasty comparisons: The greatest distance a ball has ever been thrown is 165 yards 1 foot and ½ inch. The longest "hit" on record is a few inches over 200 yards. In this last instance the ball was sent into the air at an angle of forty-five degrees. Now, mind this: Allowing the same ball to have been hit in the same direction at the same angle, with sufficient force to give it the velocity at the starting point that it would acquire in falling in falling from a height of 555 feet, it would have gone 544 yards instead of a bare fraction over 200 yards. And then, even think of trying to catch a ball the instant it leaves the bat on a 200 yards' trip! Ouch! Is it any wonder that the boys let the ball slip through their fingers when it was on the "home stretch" after having fallen from the apex of the memorial to the father of his country?

PECULIARITIES OF THE HORSE.

Why the Equine Is Never Sick at the Stomach.

There are many odd things about the anatomical and physiological make-up of the horse that are seldom noticed or mentioned, even by the so-called written "authorities" on such subjects, or by veterinary surgeons themselves, says the St. Louis Republic. Emetics have no more effect upon a living sick representative of the genus equus than they would on a marble representation of Alexander's famous old Bucephalus. Do you know why this is? It is because a horse is unprovided with a gall bladder. When one of the human family gets badly injured the gall bladder acts in sympathy, and the result is a "deathly sickness," or a fainting away entirely. With the horse it is different, not because he is not sensitive to pain, but for the reasons given. Some authorities consider that the most highly organized of the domestic creatures. One even says: "There is no living creature, not even a hysterical woman, so nervously sensitive as a horse; and, as for the contention that a horse does not feel pain, I think that he even suffers more from an injury than a man would from a hurt of the same magnitude." And yet this "nervously sensitive" creature has been known to eat a hearty meal when his entrails were trailing on the ground as a result of an encounter with a trained bull in the arena, or from gunshot wounds received in battle with human foes. This for the reason that he could not possibly get "sick at his stomach" because there is no overflow of gall to cause such sensations.

Named by a Woman.

It was Helen Hunt Jackson, it is [illegible] who named "The Garden of the C[illegible]" in Colorado. Riding past the cabin of a prospector from the south in one of the early days of the settlement, she was attracted by a beautifully kept garden, in which two negro servants, a man and a woman, were working. In answer to a question the man informed her that his name was Jupiter and the woman's Juno, whereupon she exclaimed: "Then this must be the garden of the gods."

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