

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.

Has this legend a basis of fact? It cannot be accepted as a whole, it appears, because the Atlantis, 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 around 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 Alvarez 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, 611-608 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 glyptics 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 Flirting 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, pocket-book 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 dollar's 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 women who lose things stand a pretty good chance of getting them returned.

THIS EARTH OF CURS.

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 700 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 780 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 630,000,000 years. It follows that the netive work of erosion 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 submergence 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 erosion 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 overlaid 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!

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ECHO RIVER.

Peculiar Acoustic Qualities of This Vastly-extended 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 tender and profound; after which, like gentle memories, all the mellow and mysterious sounds that had gone before were re-awakened, until the hall rang again with the wondrous harmony.

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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-i-i-v-c," 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 step-ladder to climb in and unlock the door they had helped him into my room by mistake. That was all."

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HIGH-PRICED FOOD.

Tobacco and Gold on a Par on the Upper Yukon River, Alaska.

R. D. Miles, a recent visitor in San Francisco, gives the Call a graphic account of the prices current for ordinary commodities on the upper Yukon river, Alaska.

He has, according to the Call, just returned from that country, where, he states, there were over one hundred men at work during the last