

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 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, 611-605 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 graptolites 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 fact 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, 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 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.

AN ENGLISH JUNE.

The Delights of an Early Summer Evening in Cambridge.

In a recent paper in the Atlantic on the English Cambridge, Albert Gillette Hyde gives this pleasant picture of a June evening there:

"Indeed, it is hard to imagine a sight more interesting in its kind than that which the winding, narrow thoroughfares of this ancient academic city present on a fine evening in June, particularly on Saturdays, the Cambridge market day.

"A continuous stream of townsmen, gowmsmen and sturdy country folk, with the usual proportion of woman-kind, passes and repasses with quick, echoing tread, many of them walking in the middle of the clean asphalt streets. The shops are lighted up brilliantly, as in most provincial towns, though twilight at this season lasts nearly all night. In either of the main arteries of travel—Trumpington street, with its clear rivulets flowing at either curb, which becomes King's parade, Trinity street and St. John's before uniting with the other, Regent street, St. Andrews, Sidney street, etc.—and in the narrow crossway, the Petty Cury, one meets this tide at the full.

"The undergraduate is necessarily conspicuous, walking alone, or two and two, or three or four abreast, the toga virilis lightly depending from his shoulders, sometimes in the last stage of dilapidation, and streaming from his person in tags and ribbons. Mostly he is slight, good looking, youthful and beardless, or perhaps with an incipient mustache; seldom very ruddy, but at the worst of a healthy paleness.

"Naturally it is among the lightly clad groups striding in from the boats or the cricket fields that one sees the best specimens of physique. These, indeed, are often admirable, though hardly so striking in appearance as is commonly supposed; yet if anyone doubts the virility of these young Englishmen a short walk or row with one of them will quickly convince him of his error.

"One very pleasant feature of the streets is the decorum usually prevailing among the students, in former times (and in some quarters of the world even now) an unruly and turbulent element of the community. They walk together, conversing almost insidibly in the dulcet 'Cambridge tone,' which 'men' from all parts of the island are said to contract soon after coming up.

"Singing, loud talking, or shouting among them is rarely heard out of doors, though sounds of a mildly Bacchanalian type sometimes issue from college or lodging-house windows. This creditable street behavior is doubtless due to 'Cambridge tone' as much as to vigilant proctoring; yet even in the cricket field and among the boating crews (except the musical 'Well rowed' at the races) the undergraduate is rarely vociferous. The English still take their sports 'sady,' and silently."

ALMANACS IN RUSSIA.

They Play a Prominent Part in the Daily Life of the People.

"What a prominent part the almanac plays in a Russian household! And such almanacs! There is a recipe for dinner for every day in the year; there are infallible cures for burns and toothache and convulsions, for toothache, corns and bald heads. You are told all about the imperial family, and there are portraits of its members—vile caricatures surely.

"The count gravely consulted its vaticinations in his colloquy with the steward to learn when the weather would best suit for sowing mangel," says a writer in the Christian World. "I saw the countess hunting in it for an interpretation of a dream she had. Beyond the almanac no one ever reads anything. I exclude, of course, the young count and his tutor.

"There are, however, a few books in the house. In the drawing or sitting-room, one of the few articles of furniture there is an old-fashioned book-case, from which the glass has long since vanished. I had the curiosity to examine its contents. There were ten bound volumes of an illustrated weekly paper, a few old-fashioned books on agriculture, two volumes of Nekrasoff's pastoral poems, a number of incomplete works of French belles lettres of Voltaire's time, a Russian translation of Scott's 'Kenilworth,' much bethumbed and greasy. This was all old-time stuff, and represented the taste of some bygone ancestor of the count.

"I looked for anything that might denote the taste of the rising generation, and found in a corner a Russian version of 'Robinson Crusoe,' and a well-hidden novel of Zola's. Do these latter books signify the beginning of a renaissance in the house of Borisoff? To whom did the Zola belong? To the countess, I suspect. This was a pleasant evening in the drawing-room—the only comfortable room in the house. There were a few easy chairs, a capacious sofa, a grand piano and lots of cane-bottomed chairs. Over the sofa hung a portrait of the emperor; opposite the emperor a picture of the count when he was a gay dog in the guards. But there was hardly a sign of female occupancy anywhere."

He Was Not a Kicker.

"I don't mind your daughter's practicing ten hours a day in the next flat," said the tenant in the apartment house, "even if she does keep the piano cover up and the forte pedal down. But I would like faintly to suggest that three thousand six hundred and fifty hours a year of Chopin's second nocturne has made a slight change seem desirable. Would you mind asking her to play the third or fourth nocturne on Tuesdays and Fridays, so that my wife can have a different kind of headache by way of relief?"

Curiosity Shops in China.

There are two kinds of curiosity shops in the Flowery Kingdom. One is intended for guileless globe trotters and the nouveaux riches, the other for collectors and persons of taste. In the former the proprietor asks for two hundred to two thousand per cent. profit on his goods, and in the latter he is satisfied with anything between twenty-five and one hundred per cent.

THE BOWER BIRD.

One of the Queer Denizens of Australia's Forests.

The most remarkable instance of estheticism among the birds is that exhibited by the Australian bower birds, who build long galleries in which to play, adorning them with shells, feathers, leaves, bones or any colored or glittering object which comes in their way. Capt. Stokes describes one of these bower birds as taking a shell alternately from each side of the bower and carrying it through in its beak.

Lumholz describes several of these playhouses of the bower birds. He says they are always to be found "in small brushwood, never in the open field; and in their immediate vicinity the birds collect a mass of different kinds of objects, especially snail shells, which are laid in two heaps, one at each entrance—the one being much larger than the other. There are frequently hundreds of shells, about three hundred in one heap and thirty in the other. There is usually a handful of green berries, partly inside and partly outside the bower."

In his interesting book, "Among Cannibals," Lumholz describes a playground of what would appear to be a different species of the bird, showing even a greater esthetic taste. He says: "On the top of the mountain I heard in the dense scrubs the loud and unceasing voice of a bird. I carefully approached it, sat on the ground and shot it. It was one of the bower birds, with a gray and very modest plumage and of the size of a thrush. As I picked up the bird my attention was drawn to a fresh covering of green leaves on the black soil. This was the bird's place of amusement, which, beneath the dense scrubs, formed a square a yard each way, the ground having been cleared of leaves and rubbish.

"On this neatly-cleared spot the bird had laid large, fresh leaves, one by the side of the other, with considerable regularity, and close by he sat singing, apparently extremely happy over his work. As soon as the leaves decay they are replaced by new ones."

THE INDIAN'S SUGAR.

How It Was Extracted from the Trees in Vermont.

Ever since the Indians in the section now known as Fletcher discovered "honey" in the maple trees, that district has been known far and wide as the heart of the Vermont maple sugar country. The way the red man extracted the delicious compound was somewhat slow as compared with the present process. He used to cut a slanting gash in the bark and insert in the lower end a gauge-shaped piece of wood, from which the sap ran and dropped into a poplar or basswood trough. At the end of the season these troughs would be set up against the trees and left until the following season, by which time the troughs would be thoroughly mildewed. This material added to the favor of the aboriginal sugar, but can hardly be said to have improved it. The evaporator of those times consisted of an iron kettle swung from a sapling bent over a stump. By a slow and tedious process the sap was first heated and then boiled in this kettle, often taking two or three days' boiling before it could be sugared off. This was the way in which the redskins and the early Vermonters elicited out a "sweetain" to their tea and Johnny cake.

In the best Fletcher groves of to-day a long pipe or trough line runs from some central spot in the grove down to the big storage tanks in the sugar house. Here the perfected evaporator, when under full headway, will convert the first sap into sirup in half an hour, consuming about one cord of wood to produce a hundred pounds of sugar. There are in the town of Fletcher, at a moderate estimate, thirty thousand trees, this being probably within the real number.

A Deceptive Name.

A Philadelphian and his wife were dropped one hot summer day at the tiny post village of Mount Pleasant, on the Delaware railroad, and as they gazed over a flat country, whose differences of level are scarcely perceptible save by the aid of a surveyor's instrument, a native asked them what they were looking for. Then the Philadelphian explained that the name of the place had called up such visions of an airy eminence that he and his wife had come down to spend their vacation. They learned from the native that summer board was not obtainable there, and he obligingly explained that the place received its deceptive name in commemoration of the fact that it was situated on the watershed between Delaware and Chesapeake bays, the backbone of the peninsula, as it is locally called.

Cremation in Olden Times.

The Smithsonian institution has printed a paper by Dr. J. F. Snyder describing an urn containing incinerated human bones which was dug out of an ancient mound in Georgia. The urn, or vase, is nearly conical, eleven and a half inches high, and was covered by an inverted bell-shaped vessel fifteen and three-fourths inches in height. The ashes nearly half filled the vase, and mingled with them were calcined human teeth and fragments of bones. Lying on the surface of these remains were a quantity of wampum and several small pearls that had been pierced for stringing.

Antiquity of Tobacco.

Tobacco was noted by Columbus on his very first voyage. It was first cultivated by John Rolfe in 1613, and as early as 1619 a lot of 20,000 pounds was shipped to England. In 1732 a tobacco factory was started on the Rappahannock river, and about 1769 the first south of the James river was built in Mecklenburg county. In 1745 the exports from Virginia amounted to 42,841 hogsheds of about 1,600 pounds each, and increased till 1788, after which there was a decline until after the revolution. It is now grown in most of the southern states with Kentucky in the lead.

RUNNING TO TITLES.

Americans Are Getting Too Fond of Handles to Their Names.

Military Officials Who Have Never Performed Any Field Service—Some of the Absurdities of an Inane Practice.

In no place perhaps is the inclination to affix titles to the names of public men more prominent than in Washington, where the fields of American life have unrivaled opportunities for development. The stock of generals, colonels, majors or judges who never saw service in the field or forum but who are not at all unfamiliar with practice at the bar of one sort or another, is unlimited, and sometimes leads to confusion, amusing or annoying as the case may be. In most states, if not in all, it is customary for the governor to surround himself with a military staff ranging from general to captain. This is a custom handed down from colonial days, when the governor of a colony had his council, the members of which in the military organizations of the colony were commanders of the forces in their respective counties, with the title of colonel. As militaryism declined it was perfectly natural for the advisors of the governor to inherit the military title, as a distinction from the mass of men who were not thus honored with close friendship with the executive. Later, under state governments, the governor's staff became quite a feature in the life of politics. Many a worker for the success of the ticket has been appeased by appointment to a place on the governor's staff, and has gone down to posterity with all the glamor of a military title surrounding him. It is not necessary for any staff officer, with perhaps the exception of the adjutant general, to have a particle of knowledge of military affairs beyond adeptness in making a salute or acknowledging one. But quite frequently he has not even that. At the Washington centennial in New York a few years ago the streets were full of brilliantly attired staff officers, and the Washington Post thinks that the men on guard duty who brought their guns to present arms whenever a ranking officer hove in sight must have been highly amused at the questioning glance given them by more than one of the carpet knights as they walked or rode past without acknowledging the salute.

As governors are frequently changed, say every four years, in forty-four states, the possibilities in the way of the manufacture of colonels and generals are readily appreciated. Giving each governor twenty staff officers and aids—a modest estimate—in twenty years there would have been nearly five thousand of such distinguished individuals, and when to these are added those who bear the titles because their fathers, once had them, the number is expanded much more. The constitution of the staff, too, allows of an interchange of titles. The judge advocate general, ranking as colonel, for instance, may be called with propriety judge, colonel or general, and so on through this list. Other causes, however, contribute to the list of titles. In a neighboring city a gentleman connected with the editorial staff of a newspaper had the distinction to quit the army at the close of the war as a private. But under the luxuriating influence of newspaper work he acquired a portly frame, developed his good comradeship and gathered a collection of anecdotes and witticisms which always made him a welcome addition to any party out for fun. In an evil hour one of his younger associates called him colonel, and colonel he has been ever since.

Not long ago, in a southern city, was raised a monument to a confederate leader. One of the newspapers published quite an attractive souvenir, which, by request, was sent to a Massachusetts town for presentation to a grand army post. Along with the souvenir went a letter of the shake-hands-across-the-bloody-chasm order from the editor. The presentation took place and the local papers had quite an account of the event, including a reproduction of the "patriotic letter" from the southern editor, who was called "Gen." So-and-so. As he had just turned thirty years the editor enjoyed the joke on himself. In another city a popular railroad official was never called anything but general by one who was frequently thrown with him. As the official was quite a young man, whose military record had never been made, his friend was asked one day why he gave him a title and replied: "Why, don't you know he is a general passenger agent?" These are but few of the absurdities outcropping from the insane practice against which signs of protest are becoming apparent.

CRESTS AND THEIR ORIGIN.

They Were Used Far Back in Ancient Times—Some of the More Notable.

Crests are ascribed to the Carians and they are of very ancient origin. They are mentioned by Homer and Virgil and described as in use among the heathen gods and goddesses. Thus the crest of Minerva's helmet was an owl. Mars bore a lion or tiger and Jupiter Ammon a ram's head. These symbols were formerly placed on the helmet and were great marks of honor, only worn by heroes of great valor or by those who were advanced to some superior military command. Richard I. had a crest on his helmet resembling a plume of feathers; Richard II. wore a lion on a cap of dignity above the crown on his helmet; Alexander III., of Scotland, had a plume of feathers, and James I. wore a lion. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, according to the Brooklyn Eagle, the crest was described as being a figure placed upon a wreath, coronet or cap of maintenance above the helmet or shield. A crest was anciently worn on the heads of commanders in the field, and then only in order to distinguish them from their followers. After the institution of the order of the garter, and in imitation of Edward III. all knights companions of the order began to wear crests. This practice soon became more general, and they were assumed by all who considered themselves entitled to bear arms.

DOINGS OF A VOODOO.

A Negro Doctress in Louisiana Swallows Snakes for Pastime.

An aged negress of great repute as a "voodoo," or witch doctress, among the negroes of this section, is attracting much attention, not only from those of her own color, but from the more intelligent portion of the community, and the way in which she does this is to apparently swallow a number of small snakes of a variety unknown in this section. They are of the dusky color, nearly black, with a dull green at the flat head, and of a dirty white in the belly, says a Louisiana correspondent of the Cincinnati Enquirer.

These reptiles remain secreted about old Nancee's cabin until she gives a peculiar whistling call, when they will come to her, wriggling in great haste over the floor, up her dress, and run into her open mouth, hissing hideously. They disappear and remain hidden sometimes for minutes. She asserts that they are concealed in her stomach until she recalls them, when they will come pouring out to writhe about her scraggy neck and coil in her bosom.

Where the snakes really go when they vanish in her mouth is a mystery, and has puzzled all the physicians about, many having come from New Orleans to witness the phenomenon. Some really believe that the snakes do go down into the stomach, while others are convinced that the witch is simply playing some sleight-of-hand trick on them; but if the latter is the case it is so cleverly done that there is no detecting the performance.

The witch presents a most extraordinary and hideous appearance sitting with the snakes darting their flat heads in and out of her toothless mouth, with their little bead-like eyes snapping as if in fury at all about their mistress. As nearly as can be counted there are six or seven of these reptiles, though old Nancee says there are as many more, but they are all so much of a size and color that they cannot be identified. They are probably of a harmless nature, though old Nancee declares they are highly poisonous and no one wishes to experiment with them.

ODD WAYS OF OSTRICHES.

The Males Brood Over the Young and Capture Each Other's Families.

The ostrich has many strange ways, and I was particularly interested in studying them, says a writer in Forest and Stream. They go in flocks of three or four females and one male about their nesting time, and for several weeks before locating their nests the hens drop their eggs all about the pampas. These are called hauchos eggs (pronounced "watho"), and are much more delicate in flavor than the eggs taken from the nests. They have a thinner shell, and when fresh laid are of a beautiful golden color. We cooked them by roasting them before the fire. We would first break a hole in the small end of the egg, large enough to insert a teaspoon. The egg would be set up among some hot ashes, a pinch of salt and pepper put into it, and the contents kept stirred with a stick so that all would be done alike. The flavor is excellent, and one egg would satisfy a very hungry man.

As soon as the ostriches decide upon a suitable place for a nest, the male bird scratches away the grass and slightly hollows out the ground for a space of about three feet in diameter. All the hens of the flock lay in the same nest until there are from twenty-five to thirty-five eggs laid. The male birds then take possession and sit on the eggs until they are hatched. As soon as the flock can leave the nest, the old fellow leads them away to feed on flies and small insects, and everything is lovely until he spies another male bird with a brood.

As soon as the old birds see each other they make a peculiar booming sound, and every little ostrich disappears in the grass. The old ones then approach each other and engage in a most deadly conflict. They fight until one or the other is killed or runs away. The remaining one will then utter another peculiar sound, and both broods will spring up from their hiding places and follow the victor, who struts off as proud as a peacock. I have seen old male ostriches with three broods, each of a different size, two of which they had captured.

Love of Animals to Drink.

Close observers have noticed that flies will gather upon a half-drunken, sleepy sot, while a dozen sober men in the same room are not molested by them. The flies will buzz around their subject with great delight, frequently alighting upon his perspiring face. Off they go, and return again and again, quaffing the alcoholic nectar issuing from his pores. After awhile their flight becomes uncertain and eccentric, and sometimes they come in collision. Recently a drunken man raised his hand and brushed them from his face. Some fell to the floor and lay there paralyzed. After awhile they got on their feet and wearily flew off, half dazed. Many animals yield to the seduction of rum drinking, especially elephants, horses, cows and swine. Poultry, especially turkeys, will absorb the tempting drink till they tumble over in a leaden sleep, lying around as if dead, and utterly ignoring their accustomed roosts. On awaking they stagger for a few moments and soon recover, but it is hours before they renew their cheerful cackling.

Radically Different.

Two things may look very similar on the surface, but be entirely unlike at bottom, as in this case reported by the Memphis Appeal-Avalanche:

The landlady of a boarding house in this city had an eight-year-old son who is remarkably precocious. Not long ago he went up to town and had his head shaved. Among the boarders is a gentleman whose hair long ago bade him farewell. This gentleman came to the table the next day, and said:

"Why, Charley, you haven't any more hair now than I have."

"Yes, sir," said Charley, "that's so; but I have a lot more roots than you have."

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