

VANISHED CIVILIZATIONS



—From "Vanished Cities."

Glories Gone with Time

"Lost Cities," by Leonard Cottrell (Rinehart. 251 pp. \$4.50) and **"Vanished Cities,"** by Hermann and Georg Schreiber (translated by Richard and Clara Winston. Knopf. 344 pp. \$5.75), describe ancient civilizations that were destroyed by nature, wealth, and war, and tell how modern scientists have reconstructed their stories. Professor C. A. Robinson, Jr., of Brown University reviews them.

By C. A. Robinson, Jr.

IT IS a coincidence that Leonard Cottrell's "Lost Cities" and Hermann and Georg Schreiber's "Vanished Cities" should appear simultaneously, and yet it may be even stranger that the vast panorama of once-famous and fabulous cities—packed as they are with legendary, historical, geological, anthropological, and other fascinating details—should only now be unfolding in popular fashion. The two books can easily be read one after the other, for, despite the similarity of topic, there is little overlapping and their approach is quite different.

Leonard Cottrell, a well-known English writer on archeological subjects, has quite frankly composed his book for entertainment and amusement. He has a breathless tale to tell of that amazing American consul in Yucatan, Edward Thompson, who some sixty years ago decided to explore the Mayan Sacred Well of Chichen-Itza. Actually this was a small lake, 160 feet across and sixty feet deep, but with a sheer drop of seventy feet to the surface of the water. Thompson ordered dredging machinery and then went to Boston to take lessons in deep-sea diving.

On his return to Chichen-Itza, Thompson first dredged the mud out of the well's bottom until he reached the rocky floor. Then, with a Greek professional diver whom he had hired, he descended into the hole. "During the first ten feet of descent," Thompson writes, "the light rays changed from yellow to green and then to purplish black. After that I was in utter darkness. When I gulped and opened the air-valves in my helmet a sound like 'pht-pht' came from each ear and then the pain ceased. Several times this process had to be repeated before I stood on the bottom. . . . I felt . . . a strange thrill when I realized that I was the only living being who had ever reached this place alive and expected to leave it again still living. Then the Greek diver came down beside me and we shook hands." Skulls and jewelry belonging to the girls who had been thrown in as a sacrifice were recovered, but not until Thompson had had even more harrowing experiences.

Better still, perhaps, is Cottrell's

account—complete with marvelous photographs—of Hiram Bingham's discovery in 1912 of the Inca city at Vilcabamba. It had not been discovered earlier, Bingham explains, "because this ridge is in the most inaccessible part of the Andes. No part of the highlands of Peru is better defended by natural bulwarks . . . Here, in a remote part of the canyon, on the narrow ridge flanked by tremendous precipices, a highly civilized people, artistic, inventive, well-organized, at some time in the distant past built themselves a sanctuary for the worship of the sun."

I was particularly glad that Cottrell resurrected Henry Layard, the early nineteenth-century excavator in Assyria, for it is well to be reminded of the dangers and difficulties faced by archeologists of another day and to note the simple beginnings of a great science. For example, Layard had to do business with an evil-looking Turkish official in Mosul, whom he describes thus:

Nature had placed hypocrisy beyond his reach. He had one eye and one ear; he was short and fat, deeply marked by smallpox and harsh in voice. . . . He had revived many good old customs, which the reforming spirit of the age had suffered to fall into decay. He particularly insisted on *dish-parassi* ["tooth-money"]; or a compensation in money levied upon all villages in which a man of such rank is entertained, for the wear and tear on his teeth in masticating the food he condescends to receive from the inhabitants.

It is by means of a multitude of quotations such as these that Cottrell generates so much interest, for I do not think that he himself writes very well. I cannot agree with him that there is "something perverted and repellent about Sumerian statuary";

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it is neither helpful nor good esthetic judgment to remark that "like the Aztec or Maya art of North America, one either likes it or loathes it. . . . The reader must judge for himself." Despite his disclaimer of any didactic purpose, Cottrell does in fact furnish much information as he proceeds to fascinating sites in the Hittite Empire, the Indus Valley, Ceylon, and elsewhere.

The Schreibers cover many more sites than Cottrell does and give a more sober account; they are also, I fear, occasionally dull. Some readers, however, may wish to have a summary of the pros and cons of the Atlantis legend. But I doubt that many will care very much that "a Mr. Nanking suggested in a book published in London in 1827 that very probably 'the first Inca of Peru was a son of Kublai Khan'."

It is to the great credit of the Schreibers—two Viennese brothers, each with a doctorate—that they are apparently equally at home in the various continents and islands and millenniums of our world. In order to emphasize the vivid contrast between glory and decay, they have divided their account into three parts: cities, such as Sodom and Pompeii, destroyed by the forces of nature; cities made great through their wealth and destroyed because of it, such as those around Zimbabwe in Africa; and cities, such as Karakorum north of the Gobi Desert, that were ruined by war. During this extraordinary parade the reader is made constantly to feel the monumental achievement of generations of scholars in recreating the story of our past.

The Schreibers provide a good description and wonderful photographs of the temple of Angkor-Wat, the civilization it represents, and its incredible jungle setting. As another example of the many places they bring alive I should mention Palmyra, the caravan city situated in an oasis of the Syrian desert. There is something downright romantic about Zenobia, the queen who dared to stand up to the Roman Empire; but, of course, the third century was also a time of terrible trial for civilization.

Both books are beautifully illustrated. The Schreiber volume is the more sumptuous, with thirty-five line drawings, sixty-eight photographs, and three maps; it has also been well translated. Neither book has striven for cheap popularity by retailing scandalous stories concerning the personal lives of their explorers, adventurers, scientists, and scholars. The books represent good popularization, and few can object to weaknesses in the research that has been expended on them.

FRANCE

Love Song to Marianne

"History of France," by André Maurois (Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. 598 pp. \$7.50), tells in a single volume the story of "the lasting miracle" of that nation from ancient Gaul to 1956. Here it is reviewed by Professor Leo Gershoy of New York University, whose *"The Era of the French Revolution"* has just been published.

By Leo Gershoy

UNDER the persuasive pen of the distinguished biographer André Maurois, "the lasting miracle" of France from ancient Gaul to 1956 becomes both informative history and something more than history. The colorful pages of his "History of France" are in fact a long, sustained song of love. Not the love song of a romantic, adventurous, and passionate swain, blind to everything save the beauty, charm, and virtues of his beloved, but the tribute of an understanding and mellow father, gazing upon his children, proud of their qualities of course, but tolerant of their foibles, preferring not to see and call attention to all that he does see. Father of his children? Rather, the child of his parents. The descendant of forty generations of ancestors who built the France that he cherishes.

Style and substance are one in his

fluid narrative. For to Maurois, masterly teller of stories, "real history is made up of individuals and acts"; and with an eye keen to color and tone, an intelligence sensitive to moods and play of feeling and thought, he parades the long galaxy of heroes who have given to France the impress of personality that "has the special privilege," he writes in his conclusion, "of deeply moving the people of the earth."

He is proud of the military and diplomatic triumphs of his country, of the earlier conquest of empire, and the imaginative contemporary conception of the French Union. He writes eloquent pages on the recuperative strength of France, too often, he feels, unaided by her natural allies. He calls attention to her remarkable capacity to rebuild her unity after shattering strife or defeat. He is proud most of all of the extraordinary continuity of her history and of the steadfast faith of his countrymen in the ability of their *patrie* to fulfill her mission of being the advance guard of freedom.

HIS heroes are the men and women who have served the deep desire of Frenchmen for authority and discipline and have imparted to their compatriots the unity of national thought, their good sense, their feeling for order, their respect for beauty. The long line stretches far into the past, from Charlemagne "who created the West" through the medieval kings who substituted the traditions of monarchy "for the convulsions of anarchy"; from Henri IV and Louis XIV and their resolute ministers who struggled against local disorder and created the absolute monarchy, through Napoleon who consolidated the gains of the Revolution of 1789, to Gambetta and Thiers who jointly founded the Third Republic. Votary of the classical ideal of good sense and measure, he admires "the middle party" that in all of France's trials preserved and augmented the great heritage.

But he views with a mixture of pain, distaste, and forbearance the aberrations of partisans, zealots, and visionaries. Calvin and Robespierre are not among the heroes; there are no wreaths for the Jacobins, no tributes to the men who from time to time revived "the unfortunate conflict," "the

