

Myths Hint Indians Knew Mammoths

Archæology

DID the early Indians on this continent know the great hairy mammoth, monstrous survivor of the Ice Age? Did they hunt him for his meat and hide and ivory?

Prof. William Duncan Strong of the University of Nebraska thinks it possible. Before the anthropological section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, he told of evidence which he has found in the myths of certain remote Algonkian tribes that seems to point that way.

The first was secured from the Naskapi Indians of northern Labrador. The Naskapi are an extremely isolated and conservative group who retain to the present time many primitive customs and beliefs. In the quite widespread Djakabish legend the Naskapi version tells of a huge primal monster that destroyed the parents of the hero.

"The animal is described as very large, with a big head, big teeth and a very long nose with which he hit people," said Prof. Strong. "His tracks in the snow were deep and round. After a considerable struggle Djakabish killed this monster with his arrows, cut him up and used the ears for his bed. The native name for the creature is 'Katcitoask' and one Indian who had seen pictures of the elephant translated it by the latter name. The same native term is used by the Rupert House Cree in their version of the legend.

"The second reference was secured by Dr. F. G. Speck from the Penobscot Indians in Maine," Prof. Strong continued, "Here Snow Owl, a Penobscot culture hero, was searching far to the south for a wife. He noticed that the water courses were drying up and followed up the valleys to find what caused it. He noticed what seemed to be hills without vegetation moving slowly about. Upon closer scrutiny he saw that these masses were really the backs of great animals with long teeth, animals so huge that when they lay down they could not get up. They drank half a day at a time, thus taking up all the water from the land.

"Snowy Owl went on and after many adventures secured his wife. Then he returned to the place where these animals had their 'yard'. Here he cut certain trees upon which the monsters were accustomed to lean for rest at night so that when they

did so the trees would break. Thus the animals fell upon the sharpened stumps and Snowy Owl shot them all. The water courses filled up and his people rejoiced.

"Both of these myth fragments call to mind the 'great elk' legend, recorded by Father Charlevoix in 1744, an 'elk' which made all others seem like ants, that could walk without difficulty through eight feet of snow and whose skin was proof against all sorts of weapons. Most remarkable of all, the old Indian account stated that the monster had an arm coming out of his shoulder which he used as they did theirs. Only a very vivid imagination or the sight of a living, not a fossil proboscidean, could account for such a description as this."

SOME of the oldest American immigrants, whose fossil forms were buried within the soil millions of years ago, were described before the Paleontological Society by Dr. Willard Berry, of Ohio State University.

Describing fossil remains of mollusks and other forms of life found in South America, in the West Indies, and in the distant East Indies, Dr. Berry concluded that there must have been a migration route for some prehistoric creatures across the Pacific from the East Indies. It has usually been assumed that the route was across the Atlantic, from the European Mediterranean.

"I am not trying to argue for a Pacific continent, establishing a land bridge over the present wide Pacific ocean," Dr. Berry said. "These East Indian and equatorial American similar forms must have crossed the area at a time when there was shallow water of general tropical character."

The marine animals described by Dr. Berry were chiefly from the Eocene period of prehistory, which according to some estimates would give them an antiquity of 55,000,000 years.

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12,000 Fossil Shells Examined

Paleontology

How a work of ten years' duration, in the course of which 12,000 fossil shells were examined under the microscope and hundreds of photographs and drawings were made, is helping to solve some of the riddles of evolution left unanswered by Darwin, was explained in a report to the Paleontological Society of America, by Prof. C. L. Fenton, of the University of Buffalo.

"Whole races, families and even phyla of animals are born, develop, grow old, and die," Dr. Fenton says. "They do so in the same way that the individual goes through the life cycle, and probably for the same reason.

"There are hundreds of cases in which races of animals have come into existence, have developed characters which seem to have no value, or which even were harmful, and then died. The series of changes are so regular that if one finds part of the fossil record of such a series he can predict what the rest will be, and how it will end. This is a kind of evolution Darwin does not explain."

The reason for this is that the metabolism, or power of the animal to carry on the essential life processes, decreases with the age of the family just as it does with the age

of an individual, Dr. Fenton suggests. The theory is not new to science, he says. He has just applied it in a new way.

In his examination of thousands of shells under the microscope, Dr. Fenton has observed that this decreasing metabolism is indicated by a steady degeneration in the ornamentation of the shell.

In the lower beds of the formation, where the race of shells is in its youth, lines of ornamentation might appear as solid lines. As the race neared its middle age, these lines would become constricted, and even broken. Or they might, still later, appear as isolated dots, but still showing the orderly arrangement as in a line. Toward the extreme old age, even the line is lost, and these dots waver until no straight lines are noticeable.

Decreasing metabolism in the race is also apparent in the ease with which injuries to the individual animals are repaired, Dr. Fenton has found. Thus in the early youth of the race, injuries received while the shell is small may be so completely and quickly repaired that they are scarcely noticeable in the older animal.

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