

THE DISCOVERY OF THE MAMMOTH.

BY C. F. HOLDER.

At the close of the last century, a poor fisherman named Shumarhoff lived near the mouth of the Lena River, which flows through the cold Siberian country and is lost in the icy waters of the Arctic Sea. In the summer, he plied his vocation on the sea-coast, and during the long winter lived far up the river, where it was, perhaps, a little warmer. It is safe to say that Shumarhoff would never have made a great noise in the world—in fact, would never have been heard of—had it not been for a wonderful discovery he made while coming down the river one spring. The river-banks of this cold country are quite peculiar. Those on the western side are generally low and marshy, while those on the eastern are often from sixty to one hundred feet in height. In the extreme north, this high elevation is cut into numerous pyramidal-shaped mounds, which, viewed from the sea or river, look exactly as if they had been built by man. In the summer, these strange formations are free from snow, and to a depth of ten feet are soft; but below this they are continually frozen, and have been for untold ages. They are formed of layers of earth and ice—sometimes a clear stratum of the latter many feet in thickness.

It was before such a mound that our fisherman stopped, dumb with astonishment, one spring morning, so many years ago. About thirty feet above him, half-way up the face of the mound, appeared the section of a great ice-layer from which the water was flowing in numberless streams; while protruding from it, and partly hanging over, was an animal of such huge proportions that the simple fisherman could hardly believe his eyes. Two gigantic horns or tusks were visible, and a great woolly body was faintly outlined in the blue, icy mass. In the fall, he related the story to his comrades up the river, and in the ensuing spring, with a party of his fellow-fishermen, he again visited the spot. A year had worked wonders. The great mass had thawed out sufficiently to show its nature, and on close inspection proved to be a well-preserved specimen of one of those gigantic extinct hairy elephants that roamed over the northern parts of Europe and America in the earlier ages of the

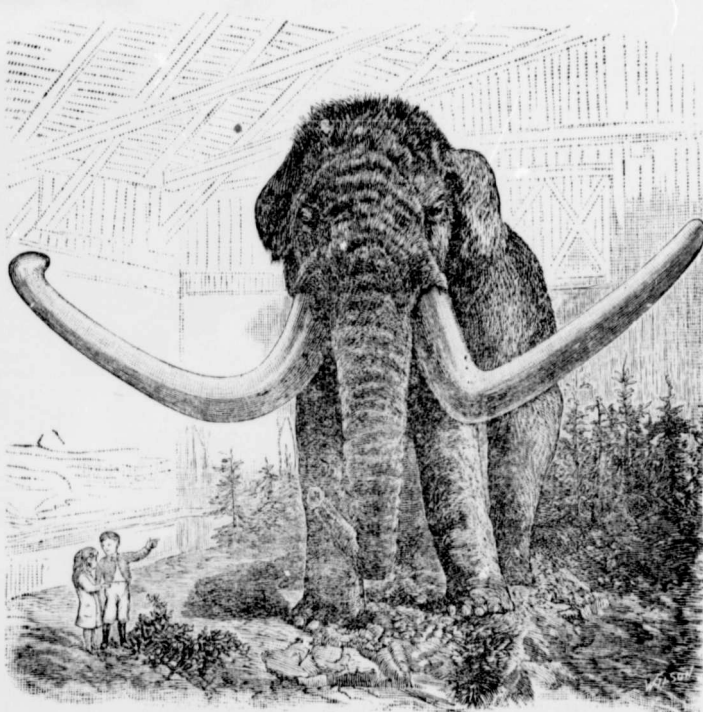
world. The body was still too firmly attached and frozen to permit of removal. For four successive years the fishermen visited it, until finally, in March, 1804, five years after its original discovery it broke away from its icy bed and came thundering down upon the sands below. The discoverers first detached the tusks, that were nine feet six inches in length, and together weighed three hundred and sixty pounds. The hide, covered with wool and hair, was more than twenty men could lift. Part of this with the tusks, were taken to Jakutsk and sold for fifty rubles, while the rest of the animal was left where it fell, and cut up at various times by the Jakoutes, who fed their dogs with its flesh.

with the exception of one fore leg, while all the other bones were still held together by the ligaments and flesh, as if the animal had been dead only a few weeks. The neck was still covered by a long mane of reddish wool, and over thirty pounds more of the same colored wool or hair were collected by the scientist from the adjacent sand, into which it had been trodden by bears and other animals of prey. In this condition the mammoth with the tusks, which were repurchased in Jakutsk, was taken to St. Petersburg and there mounted.

Our illustration depicts this very specimen, representing it as it appeared when alive and moving along with ponderous tread through the scanty woodland of

giants of the north, and everything must have given way before them.

Tusks of this animal had been discovered previous to Shumarhoff's find, and have been found since in such great quantities that vessels go out for the sole purpose of collecting them. Eschscholtz Bay, near Behring Strait, is a famous place for them, and numbers have also been found in England. It is stated that the fishermen of Happsiburgh have dredged up over two thousand mammoth teeth during the past twelve years—a fact showing that a once favorite resort, or perhaps burying-ground, of these great creatures, is now covered by the ocean. In the cliffs of Northern Alaska remains of the mammoth are often seen, and the New Siberian Islands recently visited by the Arctic explorer, Baron Nordenskjöld, are liberally supplied with these, as well as remains of other and equally interesting extinct and fossil animals. The mammoth was so called from a curious belief among the Siberians that this enormous animal lived in caverns under the ground, much after the fashion of a mole. Many of the tusks and bones were found buried in the frozen earth, and it was the natural conclusion that the animal lived there when alive. They believed it could not bear the light of day; and so dug out with its tusks great tunnels in the earth.—*St. Nicholas.*



THE MAMMOTH OF ST. PETERSBURG.

A strange feast this, truly—meat that had been frozen solid in the ice-house of Nature perhaps fifty thousand years,* more or less; but so well was it preserved, that when the brain was afterward compared with that of a recently killed animal, no difference in the tissues could be detected.

Two years after the animal had fallen from the cliff, the news reached St. Petersburg, and the Museum of Natural History sent a scientist to secure the specimen and purchase it for the Emperor. He found the mammoth where it originally fell, but much torn by animals, especially by the white bears and foxes. The massive skeleton, however, was entire,

* According to Sir William Logan, from five hundred thousand to one million years ago.

the northern countries. Its length is twenty-six feet, including the curve of the tusks; it stands sixteen feet high, and when alive it probably weighed more than twice as much as the largest living elephant. And, as some tusks have been found over fifteen feet in length, we may reasonably conclude that Shumarhoff's mammoth is only an average specimen, and that many of its companions were considerably larger.

Imagine the spectacle of a large herd of these mighty creatures rushing along over the frozen ground, the reverberation of their tread sounding like thunder. When enraged, their wild, headlong course must have been one of terrible devastation. Large trees were but twigs to these

THREE BLACK RATS.

The Rev. J. Yeames tells an anecdote of a drunkard reclaimed by the curious means of a dream. The dream was of three black rats; one was a fat one, the second a blind one, and the third a poor lean one. The man could not get the dream out of his head, and at length his son gave him the interpretation of it in this wise:—The fat rat was the publican, the blind one was the father, the victim of drink, and the poor one was the family, the prey of misery and want.—*The Freeman.*

WHOEVER searches the biographies of our most eminent and useful men and women, will be surprised to find how many of them got their best start in life in the way in which, early in life, they were moved to spend their winter evenings.—*Congregation-alist.*

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