

Mysteries of Nature

By G. Frederick Wright, A. M. LL. D.

HUGE MAMMOTHS ENCASED IN ICE.

The mammoth is an extinct species of elephant which was formerly spread all over Europe, northern Asia, and North America as far south as Mexico. In size he was somewhat larger than the elephant. Whereas Jumbo stood 11 feet high, the mammoth skeleton recently set up in the museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences stands 13 feet as mounted, which would make him about 14 feet high when alive. The tusks of the mammoth were enormous. Those of one recently found in Texas, and now mounted in the American Museum of Natural History in New York city, measure 13 feet and ten inches, and would weigh 200 pounds apiece. The mammoth had a trunk like suits of hair—the largest consisting of rough, black bristles 18 inches in length, the next a coat of close-set hair from nine to ten inches long, and underneath all a soft, reddish wool, about five inches long, forming a covering which would shed water, and enable the animal to stand any amount of arctic cold.

At the present time the elephant is limited to southern Asia and to central and southern Africa. The Asiatic species, however, differ in many respects from the African. The African elephant has much larger ears than the Asiatic; so that they completely cover the shoulder when thrown back, sometimes being three and one-half feet wide. Its teeth are also different from those of the Asiatic species, and its tusks heavier. But in both cases the tusks are much smaller than are those of the mammoth.

The elephant first appears in the Middle Tertiary deposits of northern India. From that center, still occupied by the species, it seems to have spread outward to the limits of the northern hemisphere. In the later Tertiary period a species is found fossil throughout Europe, while still later the species known as the mammoth, or, in technical terms, *elephas primigenius*, was, as already said, spread in great numbers over northern Asia and North America as far south as the Gulf of Mexico, and all over Europe north of the Mediterranean. In these regions he survived the glacial period, and lingered until some time after the advent of man.

In Siberia the mammoth wandered down the valley of all the large rivers running into the Arctic Ocean, where so many of them left their carcasses that for centuries their tusks have formed a most important export to the ivory markets of the world. During the years 1872-73 as many as 2,770 mammoth tusks, weighing from 140 to 160 pounds each, making a total of 200 tons, were entered at the London docks. Up to the present time the ivory hunters in northern Siberia come back heavily laden with this valuable material, and it forms a constant means of barter with China. The long string of camels which carry tea from China across the Desert of Gobi to Siberia return laden in no small degree with fresh mammoth tusks, brought up from the mouth of the Yenisei, the Lena and the Indigirka river.

One of the most remarkable facts concerning the distribution of the mammoth is brought to light in the discovery of their skeletons in great numbers upon the New Siberian Islands, far out beyond the mouth of the Lena river, and of similar discoveries on the Pribilof Islands in Bering Sea. On the shores of Alaska north of the Yukon river the bones of the mammoth are very numerous in the frozen soil. So fresh are the remains that, as the sun thaws them out on exposure, the air is tainted with the odor of decaying flesh.

The remains of the mammoth are found chiefly in post-glacial deposits. They occur in the post-glacial river gravels all over the north temperate zone, and beneath the deposits of loess (which are connected with the close of the glacial period) in the Missouri valley. But the situation in which they most frequently occur is in peat bogs, where they seem to have been mired soon after the glacial period, and slowly enveloped with the accumulating vegetable and earthy deposits. Usually the bones are considerably scattered, so that a good deal of digging has to be done to get all the parts. In Siberia they are found in complete preservation in the ice and frozen soil that cover the northern portion of that vast area. In 1803 Mr. Adams found an entire carcass so perfectly preserved that the flesh when thawed out was eagerly devoured by wolves and bears. This skeleton, with portions of the skin and ligaments, is now mounted in the museum of St. Petersburg. It is nine feet high and 16 feet long.

In 1846 a young Russian engineer named Benkendorf saw one of these huge animals just as it was uncovered in the frozen bank of the Indigirka river during a flood. In its stomach were the chewed fragments of the shoots and cones of fir and pine trees, showing upon what the animal lived. So vivid is his description that it is worth while to reproduce it.

"Picture to yourself an elephant with a body covered with thick fur, about 13 feet in height, and 15 in

length, with tusks 8 feet long, thick, and curving outward at their ends, a stout trunk of 6 feet in length, colossal limbs of 1½ feet in thickness, and a tall, naked up to the end, which was covered with thick tufted hair. The animal was fat, and well grown; death had overtaken him in the fullness of his powers. His parchment-like, large, naked ears lay turned up over the head; about the shoulders and the back he had stiff hair, about a foot in length, like a mane. The long outer hair was deep brown, and coarsely rooted. The top of the head looked so wild, and so penetrated with pitch, that it resembled the rind of an old oak tree. On the sides it was cleaner, and under the outer hair there appeared everywhere a wool, very soft, warm and thick, and of a fallow-brown color. The giant was well protected against the cold.

"The whole appearance of the animal was fearfully strange and wild. It had not the shape of our present elephants. As compared with our Indian elephants, its head was rough, the brain-base low and narrow, but the trunk and mouth were much larger. The teeth were very powerful. Our elephant is an awkward animal, but compared with this mammoth it is an Arabian steed to a coarse, ugly dray horse. I could not divest myself of a feeling of fear as I approached the head; the broken, widely open eyes gave the animal an appearance of life, as though it might move in a moment and destroy us with a roar. . . . The bad smell of the body warned us that it was time to save what we could, and the swelling flood, too, bade us hasten.

But I had the stomach separated and brought on one side. It was well filled, and the contents instructive and well preserved. The principal were young shoots of the fir and pine; a quantity of young fir cones, also in a chewed state, were mixed with the moss."

Still more recently, even as late as 1902, a complete skeleton was found on the banks of the Beresovka river in northeastern Siberia. The entire skin as well as the skeleton of this has been brought to St. Petersburg, and, after being stuffed, has been erected in the position in which it was found. Evidently the animal was browsing on the brink of a frozen precipice, where the footing was more insecure than he supposed. While he was stretching out for a tempting morsel of herbage the foundation gave away beneath him and he slid down backward, landing in a position from which he could not extricate himself, and was there buried by fresh avalanches from the precipice and by the accumulation of sediment from the stream and frozen up for preservation.

The fresh condition of these skeletons in Siberia and Alaska, together with the occurrence of skeletons in connection with flint implements, gives evidence that the animal continued to survive after the advent of man, so as to be for some time a contemporary of the human race on both continents, points to the recent extinction of the animal, and raises the very interesting question as to what causes could have led to this result.

Evidence that man and the mammoth were for a considerable time contemporaries comes from various quarters. In Siberia twelve feet below the surface of a cliff which stands 136 feet above the present level of the River Obi, a skeleton of a mammoth was found, associated with numerous flint implements, indicating the presence of man, while the large bones of the animal were split in the usual way of savages for extracting the marrow.

In numerous places in Europe the bones of the animal have been found both in the river gravel and in caves associated in a similar manner with flint implements, while the picture of the mammoth carved upon a piece of ivory in prehistoric times found in a cave of La Madeleine, Perigord France, is so lifelike that it must have been made by one who was familiar with the animal. In Wisconsin one of the mounds of the mound builders so perfectly represents the elephant that it is hardly possible to doubt the familiarity of the builders with this animal.

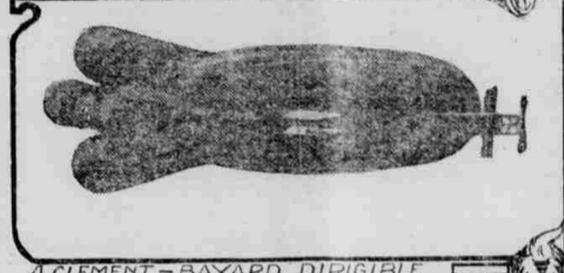
Indian Boy Kills Seven Wolf Cubs.
A lucky little Indian boy, 14 years old, killed seven wolf cubs all in one hole in the cleft of a rock on Bear Island, Lake Temagami. There is a bounty of \$15 per head on these animals.

Mr. Harry Woods, the genial factor of the Hudson's bay company, in an interesting letter to Mr. Parkinson relates the incident. He writes that the necessary affidavits were sent on to Ottawa and the boy has received a check from the department for \$105. Only recently a man out for a walk near Fort William killed five little wolves and got a \$75 bounty.—Sarnia Canadian.

White Races Conquer Leprosy.
The main lesson of leprosy is somewhat philosophic. All Europe for centuries was covered with it, but the quick, strong, re-creative blood of the white race straggled the germs of death, so it is doubtful if whites could ever be pestered much again. Yellow races, of slower, weaker blood, are still slowly stewing with it.

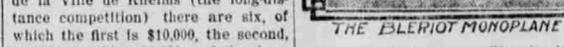
FRENCH AVIATION

GRANDE SEMAINE AERONAUTIQUE DE LA CHAMPAGNE



A. CLEMENT-BAYARD DIRIGIBLE

Will the Grande Semaine Aeronautique de la Champagne fixed for August 22 to 29 be a success or a fiasco? That question is being hotly debated in England and other countries by all who take an interest in aerial locomotion. It is evident that the success of the great event must depend very largely on the condition of the atmosphere. Unless another marked improvement is made in flying-machines within the next two months, enabling them to live in a much stronger breeze than they can face at the present moment, a windy week would prove disastrous to the enterprise. Every prudent aviator would keep his aeroplane boxed up in its shed rather than run the risk of having it wrecked. No doubt the prizes are tempting. For the Grand Prix de la Champagne et de la Ville de Rheims (the long-distance competition) there are six, of which the first is \$10,000, the second, \$5,000; the third, \$2,000, and the three others \$1,000 each; but to make it worth while to attempt to gain any one of them by remaining in the air one, two, three or four hours, the atmosphere must be calm. For this contest the organizing committee has left the competitors the choice, in the order established by the drawing of lots, of the moment for their start during the three days—Sunday, Wednesday and Friday, August 22, 25 and 27, between 9 a. m. and 5 p. m. But it depends on the decision of the controlling committee of the Aero Club of France whether more than one aeroplane will be permitted in the air over the ten-kilometer (six and one-fourth miles) circuit at the same time. It is all the more important that, if they are numerous, several competitors should be permitted to make their trial together, because, though nominally extended over three whole days, the time is in reality short. To start on this enterprise with a reasonable chance of success the weather must not be blustery and the wind not blowing with a velocity exceeding 25 kilometers (15½ miles) an hour; and there is not more than one chance in three that such a propitious condition of the atmosphere will prevail during the whole or even half of any one of the three days indicated in the program for the competition, or, at any rate, between the hours of 9 a. m. and 5 p. m. That stipulation, made with the object of enabling the paying public to return to Paris, Rheims, Chalons, etc., in good time for dinner, must militate against the chances of the aviators to distinguish themselves. The same remarks apply with greater force to the regulations of the Prix de Vitseze (the speed contest) over 30 kilometers (19 miles), for which the start has to be made either between 1 p. m. and 4 p. m. on Monday, August 23, or between 1 p. m. and 3 p. m. on Sunday, August 29. It is just between those hours of the day that there is the least chance of the atmosphere being calm. However, the higher the speed of the aeroplane the less effect the wind has on it. The competition for the special record of the circuit (ten kilometers, or six and one-fourth miles) is nominally open during the whole week, the competitors being free to make their trials at any and every moment between 9 a. m. and 6 p. m. when the circuit is not otherwise occupied. It is probable that it will generally, if not always, be otherwise occupied when the atmosphere is calm. But the aviators are granted the advantage of their time in covering the ten kilometers in other competitions being counted for this prize. As for the three other events on the program, they are down for fixed days and hours. The passenger-carrying competition is to come off on Monday, August 23, between 4 p. m. and 6 p. m., the altitude contest is fixed for 3 p. m. on Sunday, August 29, and the Gordon Bennett Aviation cup, an international speed competition over 20 kilometers (12½ miles), is to remain open the whole of Saturday, August 28, till 5 p. m. After what has been already said, it is needless to insist on the possibility, if not the probability, of the condition of the atmosphere interfering with the success of these competitions.



THE BLERIOT MONOPLANE

There are in the regulations a few other stipulations which are open to criticism. For instance, in the passenger-carrying trials each passenger must weigh at least 63 kilograms (143 pounds), which is not excessive; but the pilot is not to be permitted to substitute ballast for living freight. It seems unnecessary to impose on the aviator the necessity of risking any other life than his own, especially as a few of the existing aeroplanes are built to accommodate passengers, though capable of carrying considerable weight if properly distributed over the machine so as not to interfere with its stability. Then to fix the altitude competition at exactly 3 p. m. on Sunday, August 29, is al-

most equivalent to cancelling it altogether. There are at least ten chances to one that the state of the atmosphere at that particular moment will not be propitious for the difficult and perhaps dangerous enterprise. There is another regulation which if not modified may militate against the success of the great aviation week. Contrary to custom at most sporting meetings, if only one competitor starts to seek to win the prize he will get none, and if two start it is only the first who will be rewarded, even if there are half a dozen prizes attached to the event, as is the case in the long-distance competition. In no case will the last man receive a prize, even if being alone he is first with a "fly over," or second, or third, etc. And it may happen that the pilot on starting will imagine he will be followed by a dozen others. He may achieve a great feat by remaining in the air a very long time, beating all records of time, distance and altitude, yet if a strong breeze should then spring up and prevent the other aviators from starting he would get nothing. It is, however, true that the controlling committee is empowered by the regulations to permit, if it thinks fit, the simultaneous flight of two or several machines.

Then there is the Gordon Bennett cup, which is the great international event of the week, though all the other competitions are open to aviators of every country without exception. In this case there is no restriction concerning the payment of the money prize of \$5,000 to the successful pilot, even if he should have a "fly over," or concerning the awarding of the cup to his club; but the chances of all the competitors being equally favored by the state of the atmosphere are very small. The champions of the various nations, and there are three English, three French, three Italian, one American and one Austrian, are to start one after the other in the order of their lots. In the case of all the 11 champions presenting themselves, and of only one being permitted in the air at a time, the competition would last at least five and one-half hours, because it is not excessive to allow half an hour for the start and the flight of 12½ miles. It is therefore probable that several champions will be permitted to be in the air at the same time, especially as it is extremely rare that there are five and one-half hours in a day, between 9 a. m. and 5 p. m., during which the atmosphere is sufficiently calm to permit of successful aeroplane flights.

Flower Clocks.
"With a little time and labor, it would be possible to construct a garden whose flowers would combine to make a first rate clock," said the botanist.
"It is 5 a. m. when the sow thistle opens," he continued. "It is 5:30 when the dandelion opens. It is 7 when the white lily opens. It is 8 when the hawkweed opens.
At 11:12 a. m. the sow thistle closes. At noon precisely the yellow goat's beard closes. At 2 p. m. the hawkweed closes. At 5 the white lily closes. The dandelion, closes at 8 sharp. Since Pliny's time forty-six flowers have been known to open and shut with great punctuality at certain hours of the day and night."

Amateurish.
"Am I the first girl you ever kissed?"
"You are—I swear it!"
"I accept your apology."
Immigrants Into United States.
The total number of immigrants coming into the United States since 1820, the year of earliest record, exceeds 26,000,000.

Duty of the Biographer.
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"And another rare combination is the man, the scheme and the coin."
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