# Scientific.

THE SUPPOSED ANCIENT SKULL OF CAL-AVERAS CO., CAL.

Among the matters of leading interest at the late Scientific Convention of Chicago, was a human skull, said to be discovered in a geological position implying great antiquity. The value of the evidence, as will be seen, was very questionable, although it was such as to justify careful inquiry and discussion. From reports in daily papers, we compile the following statement of Prof. J. D. Whitney, State Geologist, we believe, of California. The skull, or so much of it as was rescued from the debris, was on exhibi-

tion before the Association. The Professor stated that the portion of a skull (exhibited) was found in February, 1866, on the claim of Matteson & Co., in Bald Mountain, at 130 feet below the surface, beneath the lava, and in close proximity to petrified oak. The parietal and part of the occipital regions are gone. It was forwarded June 29, 1866, to the office of the State Goological Survey, when the reader visited the locality of the find. When taken, it was embedded in a strong material, and a Mr. Scribner, agent of Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express, to whom it was first delivered, was not then certain what it was. When first taken out by Mr. Matteson he supposed it to be a part of the root of a tree. It was subsequently cleaned somewhat, when it was found that it was a human skull. It was then given to a Dr. Jones of that vicinity, from whom the Professor received it. The lower jaw, the parietal region, and nearly all the occipital and part of the right half of the base were then missing. The frontal bone was nearly entire. It was then embedded in ferruginous earth, pebbles, met-amorphic rock and calcareous tufa. There were fragments of other bones in the skull and about it, and the material filled the left temporal fossa; concealing the whole of the jaw and all the lower part. This incrustation of the calcareous tufa appears to have been covering the whole of the skull when found. A short time since (a few weeks only) this matter was carefully chiselled off, and it remained as now shown. On exposing the jaw, it was ascertained that the skull was of an old person, as the teeth, with the exception of a single root of a molar, are entirely gone. There were removed from it and around it, two metatarsal bones, the lower end of a left fibula, part of the ulna and of a sternum bone which might have belonged .o the original owner of the skull. There was also a fragment of a human tibia, too small to belong to the man who once had the skull. There was also a snail shell in the skull, and a circular piece of shell having a hole drilled through the centre, which might once have served as an ornament. There were also found several small pieces of charcoal.

The anatomical peculiarities of the skull are that the frontal region is large. It is uncertain whether the head was long or broad. The face was deformed, the left orbit being smaller than that of the right side, the left cheek being also higher than the right. The ridges over the orbit are strongly marked. The lower border of the opening of the nostril is not large. There is no conclusion to be drawn from the single skull as to the race that it belonged to, because it is not ascertained that it is a representative skull. It appears, however, that as a skull, it presents no signs of having belonged to a race inferior to any that lives in California, and, so far as it differs in dimensions from other types found in California, it approaches the Esquimaux.

He then went into an examination of the question of the authenticity of the skull as one found where it was claimed to have been discovered. The locality had been visited by himself, by his assistants, as well as by others, and all the facts, and the parties who are cognizant of the facts, concur in their testimony, without variation from the original. An inspection of the ground in the shaft, however, had not been made, because it has, since the matter was brought to the Professor's notice, been constantly filled with water. The appearance of the skull, when received by him, showed that it was not an ordinary skull picked up at random, in order to cheat a curious antiquarian. There is evidence of violence not recent in the manner of the fracture, it being in its strongest part, and the presence of the other bones seem to show that it was swept, with many other bones, down a shallow, but violent stream, where it was exposed to the boulders of the bed. In its passage, it was smashed, and at last it came to rest in a position where water, charged with calcareous matter, had access to it, on a base of auriferous gravel. The presence of the snail shell in the skull, was supposed to be caused by

The skull was taken from the bottom of a shaft in which were found five beds of lava and five beds of gravel interposed between the lave. The immediate place of the find was at the bottom of the eighth bed, which is of gravel. It was found at the side of the channel, with a mass of driftwood, as if all had been deposited by an eddy of the stream. which was afterwards covered by the rush of gravel, of which bed eighth is formed. He thought the evidence sufficient to establish

the crawling of the reptile into the skull,

where it subsequently died, as the deposit

around it thickened.

an authentic find. Assuming the authenticity of the find, he proceeded to consider the inferences that could be drawn from the fact of the occurrence of the skull at the position indicated. He examined under this head, the geological structure of the vicinity, the Table Rock, cene formation in Calfornia, was adduced by and Bald's Mountain, and he attributed the Prof. Whitney in evidence of the great age

abundant evidence that man had existed co- fifty feet deep, about two miles below Los temporaneous with the mastodon in Califor- Angelos in Calaveras County. Upon such

a critical examination of the region of Calaveras county, where this skull is said to have been found. He had made constant inquiries as to the probability of finding evidences of the existence of a race of men or of their work, and he was bound to say that there was not the smallest particle of evidence to prove that human remains are beneath the Tuble Mountain, in the form of osseous structure or of any of the handiworks of man, so commonly found in the adjacent neighborhood of Shaw's Flat. He had, some days since, listened to the remarks of Prof. Blake as to the evidences of the existence of man that he had described. The evidences spoken of by him were familiar to the speaker, and his inquiries led him still to doubt that they had any bearing upon the subject. He doubted whether these were really taken from beneath the Table Mountain. He here exhibited one of four molar teeth of a mastodon that he did not think any one capable of forming a judgment would doubt to be such. It was taken in February of this year, from beneath the Table Mountain, in what is known as Hughes' Tunnel, at a distance of more than 650 feet from the surface. 'He'was apprised last summer, of the existence of this skeleton, that it had already been uncovered in a portion, but the further excavation not promising profit no further investigation had been made concerning it, until lately the bones were reached. The skeleten occupied a superficial area of twenty five feet, the bones being mainly soft, so that the finger could be thrust into them. This was of the mastodon chiatus, and it constituted a fact entirely new in our geology, but the mastodon had never been attributed to this horizon. This mastodon was found four and a half feet above the auriferous gravel in a mass of non-auriferous gravel, and if this formation is believed to be tertiary, it puts the mastodon in America back to the date at which it has been found in England. Whatever might be the geological age of the formation, there is no evidence of the existence, in this same horizon, of man. He thought, perhaps, the evidence in favor of the authenticity of the skull presented was rather favorable to the opinion that it is a true find, that it should have the benefit of the doubt, but of Dr. Jones, who had had so great a hand in the transmission of the bones, he would say that, perhaps he was somewhat more credulous than the race of geologists. Moreover, it was known that throughout the calcareous formations there

throughout the calcareous formations there were found in the earlier history of Californian discovery, many skulls, several of which, as is generally alleged, have been found in limestone caverns, so common throughout the limestone zone. These were not unfrequently incrusted with calcareous matter.

The correspondent of the New York Tribune, in his report, says the attitude of the geologists present seemed to be suspension of judgment. It remains to indicate what follows if the discovery be accepted as true. The period of man's existence is extended back for ages beyond what geologists have ever assigned to it before. Since the stream flowed in that ancient water-course by the over assigned to it before. Since the stream flowed in that ancient water-course by the side of which this skulliwas found, a deposit of 130 feet of earth, lava and basalt has been placed above it, and another river has worn another valley to a depth of thousands of feet through the rock which formed the side of the ancient valley. The geologist shrinks from naming the number of thousands of years which forms the lowest period necessary for bringing about such changes. The fact, however, that such changes must have taken place since the water ceased to flow in the ancient stream can no more be denied than the multiplication table. The geology of the region, and the changes which must have taken place there in the earth's crust, were plainly shown by Profs Silliman White were plainly shown by Profs. Silliman, White ney and Blake. But to accept it as fact, that the human race existed at so remote a period, staggers even the geologists of the

Association. Prof. Silliman, though in his stay in California, could get no testimony of human remains or relics of man's handiwork being found below the basalt, as this skull is alleged to have been, yet obtained four of the molar teeth of a mastodon from a similar position. The entire skeleton of the animal was there, but crumbled into dust on exposure to the air. Prof. Whitney had no hesitation in declaring his belief that man was cotemporary with the mastodon, though the mastodon may have started first. From the discussion this morning, it would appear that the solution of the whole subject depends on whether discoveries confirming those alleged already to have been made, do or do not take place. The miners are careless, and their method of working by the use of a stream of water subjected to an enormous pressure, is very des ructive to crumb-

Prof. Whitney is confident of having new facts to present by the time the Association holds its next annual meeting.

A poetical and humorous view of the whole matter has just been placed in our hands, which we give, with the original introductory remarks of our friend:

#### TO THE PLIOCENE SKULL. A Geological Address.

[At the recent meeting of our scientific men in Chicago, a skull supposed to have been found embedded in rocks of the Plioformation of both of these to the same period, of the race upon this continent. The State not more ancient than the miocene age. Geological Surveyor had obtained it from a He thought there never would be found im- Dr. Jones, who said he had got it from a Mr. plements of human art or human remains, Scribner, who said that he had received it under the basaltic formation of the Table from a miner named Watson, who said that Rock. He thought, however, there was he had found it in a shaft one hundred and

nia. He believed the present skull belonged evidence do our scientific men build up theto the pliocene or the post-pliocene age, for adjacest to it had been discovered the milk teeth of the rhinoceros.

Prof. Sillingan remarked that he had made a critical even institute of the region of Cala. fornian comes much nearer to a true history of this "venerable" relic of humanity.]

> Speak, O man, less recent! Fragmentary fossil! Primal pioneer of pliocene formation, Hid in lowest drifts below the earliest stratum Of volcanic tufa!

Older than the beasts, the oldest Palmotherium; Older than the trees, the oldest Cryptogamia; Older than the hills, those infantile eruptions

Of earth's epidermis! Eo-Mio-Plio-whatsoe'er the "cene" was That those vacant sockets filled with awe and won-

Whether shores Devonian or Silurian beaches-Tell us thy strange story!

Or has the professor slightly antedated By some thousand years thy advent on this planet, Giving thee an air that's somewhat better fitted For cold-blooded creatures?

Wert thou true spectator of that mighty forest When above thy head the stately Sigillaria Reared its columned trunks in that remote and dis-

Carboniferous epoch? Tell us of that scene—the dim and watery woodland Songless, silent, hushed, with never bird or insect, Vailed with spreading fronds and screened with tall Lycopodiacea-

When beside thee walked the solemn Plesiosaurus, And around thee crept the festive Ichthyosaurus, While from time to time above thee flew and circled for the Licheerful Rterodactyls.

Tell us of thy food-those half marine refections, Crinoids on the shell and Brachiopods au nature!— Cuttle fish to which the picture of Victor Hugo Seems a periwinkle.

Speak, thou awful vestige of the Earth's creation— Solitary fragment of remains organic!
Tell the wondrous secrets of thy past existence— Speak, thou oldest primate!

Evenias I gazed a tarill of the maxilla . And a lateral movement of the condyloid process, With post-pliocene sounds of healthy mastication, Ground the teeth together.

And; from that imperfect dental exhibition, Stained with expressed juices of the weed Nicotian; Came these hollow accents, blent with softer mur-

'Which my name is Bowers, and my crust was Falling down a shaft in Calaveras county, But I'd take it kindly if you'd send the pieces
Home to old Missouri!"

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