

Scientific.

THE SUPPOSED ANCIENT SKULL OF CALAVERAS 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 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 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.

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.

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 lava. The immediate place of the find was at the bottom of the eighth bed, which is of gravel.

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.

abundant evidence that man had existed contemporaneous with the mastodon in California. He believed the present skull belonged to the pliocene or the post-pliocene age, for adjacent to it had been discovered the milk teeth of the rhinoceros.

Prof. Silliman remarked that he had made 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 Table 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.

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.

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.

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 PLOCIENE 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 Pliocene formation in California, was adduced by Prof. Whitney in evidence of the great age of the race upon this continent.

forty feet deep, about two miles below Los Angeles in Calaveras County. Upon such evidence do our scientific men build up theories impugning Scripture chronology.

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

Older than the beasts, the oldest Palæotherium; Older than the trees, the oldest Cryptogamia; Older than the hills, those infantile eruptions Of earth's epidemics!

So—Mio—Plio—what's'er the "cene" was That those vacant sockets filled with awe and wonder— 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 them 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 distant Carboniferous epoch?

Tell us of that scene—the dim and watery woodland Goggles, silent, hushed, with never bird or insect, Vailed with spreading fronds and screened with tall club-mosses, Lycopodiææ—

When beside thee walked the solemn Plesiosaurus, And around thee crept the feathery Ichthyosaurus, While from the loaming above thee flew and circled, Cheerful Eterodactyls!

Tell us of thy food—those half marine refectories, Crinoids on the shell and Brachiopods *au naturel*!— Cattle fish to which the *pléiade* 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!

Erewhile's I gazed in thrill 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 Nicotiana; Came those hollow accents, blent with softer murmurs Of expectation:

"Which my name is Bowers, and my crust was Hallowed in 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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