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ACCORDING to recent report, the traction is soon to penetrate into the heart of Kentucky and to the primitive hamlet of Big Bone, where, without doubt, more mastodon hunters have gathered, in the past century, and more actual finds of the mammoth have been made, than at any other one place in the world.

Big Bone is a place with a history. Before the days of steam railways, when, to get anywhere at all, you had to stage it, people came in numbers to the spot to enjoy the waters of the springs. There was a bustling summer hotel there then. This is now utterly deserted and in addition to the bone hunters, as they were termed, the summer tourists, too, have decamped.

Today, to get to Big Bone entails hiring a vehicle, rising long before decent people have breakfast, and driving from Cincinnati to the Lick. Even then you're lucky if you get back before midnight, so terrible are the roads.

On the way you hear the story of the bones. According to one version, Big Bone was the greatest battlefield this country of many battlefields has ever known. According to an Indian legend, the bones of the mighty, but worsted warriors, that are buried twenty feet beneath the surface of the now quiet earth, in acres of stiff blue clay, bear silent witness to a portion of the story. The battle itself was fought over 500 years ago, with mastodons on one side, lightning and the wrath of an Indian deity on the other.

One man secured the story from an old Indian chief as follows: When Gen. William Henry Harrison had concluded the treaty with the Indians for the great Northwest Territory, he asked the Indian chiefs if they could in any way account for the numberless mighty bones of mastodons and mammoths which lay in such marvelous collections within the small valley at Big Bone Springs.

An old chief, gray with many winters, rose and answered the question thus:

"Many moons ago, ere the white man came and while the hunting was yet good, the elk, the buffalo and the deer went often to the valley of springs to drink the smelling waters. But

many and mighty mammoths also came from afar to drink, and, as the days went on, they killed or frightened off the elk, the buffalo and the deer, so that the Indians could hunt no longer. Then the Great Spirit grew angry at the mammoths and He came down from the sky and from a high hill he hurled his thunderbolts among them. The great animals were slain in countless numbers within the valley.

"Mad with terror, those that could tore through the pathways of the valley, and the deer and buffalo who remained also fled into the forests, but the Great Spirit's thunderbolts were more terrible and more destructive to the mammoths than they had been to the game. All save one was killed before they could rush from the valley.

"This great bull, the father of the herd, had only his tusks broken off by the lightning. He was old and cunning and he went screaming across the hills, sweeping trees out of his path, as an Indian would bits of grass, until he came to a great river. Here he paused only long enough to gather himself for a mighty bound; then, leaping, he cleared the wide Ohio. He tore on, through the forest, to the Great Lakes and across them, into the cold Northeast. Here he disappeared and he was seen no more, and here he lives to this day, shaggy and gray with age; his tusks gone, but still terrible to behold."

Such was the answer that General Harrison received. Whatever of truth there is or is not in the Indian legend accounting for the bones found and to be found in the valley of Big Bone Springs, at least the strange discovery by a fisherman on the coast of Labrador in 1837 lends a wierd plausibility to the old chief's story.

The fisherman in question, while tramping the beach one day, saw a huge body frozen in the ice cliffs above him. As the ice melted the body sank to the ground, and, procuring aid, he skinned it. The skin was put aboard a Russian vessel and taken to Russia. It proved to be the skin of an arctic elephant, twenty-four feet long and sixteen feet high, and the Royal Geological Society of Russia has it now. The Smithsonian Institution of Washington heard of the matter and, in course of time, had an exact reproduction made of the skin and mounted for the museum. It does not take much imagination to read, in this find of the fisherman, a sequel to the Indian legend. Indeed, when one Indian was told of it, he said the great mammoth which had escaped into the northeast had been found at last.

So much for the tradition of the valley.

If you go mammoth hunting today and look for the story

of the bones, you will be told from another chronicle:

"Although there are signs which might point to this valley being discovered by the French long ago," this says, "the first white man to penetrate the spot was James Marshall, who came here in 1773. He found many bones of the mammoth and those also of strange, smaller animals,—a swamp some hundred acres square being literally filled with them. He told us how he made the framework of his tent with immense rib-bones, nine and ten feet long, which he picked up and drove into the earth. Marshall also found the traces of paths, leading to the springs, which were made, probably, by extinct animals, which sought them, attracted thither by the saltiness of the water.

Next, in 1805, Dr. Goforth, of Cincinnati, a well-known naturalist, made a collection of bones found at Big Bone Springs. At that time Thomas Ashe, famous English traveler, whom every historian knows as the slanderer of this country, met Dr. Goforth. The latter, desiring to send his valuable collection to the Royal Natural History Society of England, where the bones could be properly cared for and studied, placed it in charge of Ashe, who volunteered to see it safe to England. Ashe, however, on reaching London, instead of presenting the collection to the Natural History Society, sold it and pocketed the proceeds, a very fair sum.

Thomas Jefferson, who was then President, ordered more of the bones collected about this time, and those were divided equally between the Philosophical Society of Philadelphia and M. Cuvier of France. Another collection was exhumed in 1831 by Benjamin Finnel, who sold it to Mr. Graves for \$2,000. The latter took the collection to England, in turn, selling it for \$4,000. One student, the Rev. Dr. L. Johnson, then of Walton, Ky., a close authority on paleontology, and well versed in the scientific and historical lore of Big Bone,, told how his grandfather, John Tindoll, was accustomed to use great bones, five or six feet long and eight or ten inches in diameter for fire-irons. John Tindoll was a hunter for the salt forts at Big Bone in the early part of this century, and he speaks of it as being a common occurrence, in those days, for the hunters to place the bones in the great open fire-places and lay the logs upon them. Indeed, up to twenty years ago, many of the precious relics were actually used by the farmers as ricks, to cord their fire-wood against.

Dr. Johnson was an enthusiastic student of all that pertains to the Springs. Speaking of a collection of bones then in possession of Mr. Williams, of Big Bone, he says he saw in it a curious bone which corresponds to no other known bone in the animal

kingdom. From what he could make out of it, it seemed to be an elongated spinal section,—with another flat, thick bone, some three feet in height,—jutting up from it at right angles only. From this he thinks it may have belonged to some extinct animal, perhaps of the camel species.

Local historians relate how, in 1864, a well-known wholesale grocer and auctioneer of Cincinnati, Charles McLaughlin, bought Big Bone and the property surrounding and spent his summers there. In 1873 Mr. McLaughlin built a fine, two-story hotel, containing forty rooms, and various cottages, on the hills above the village, and put up a handsome pavilion at the springs, where people might go to drink the water and to bathe in it. Travelers from all over the country, east and west, and also many from Europe, came to Big Bone Springs, year after year, and during the summer the place was gay with people. They came by way of the Ohio River, for in those days the boats were the nearest and quickest means of reaching Big Bone. Landing at Hamilton, which is only two miles west of Big Bone, they were met by McLaughlin's busses from the hotel.

After personally superintending the hotel for three years, McLaughlin went West and others took charge, but it wasn't long before the hotel went down and the old-time guests went away, so the place was closed and has remained so ever since. Later McLaughlin returned to the Springs and for some time resided in a wing of the hotel.

In 1865, before he built the hostelry,—he told one interviewer,—Prof. Agassiz came to Big Bone in pursuit of science and spent the summer with him. Agassiz was much elated over what he found and he offered McLaughlin three cents a foot for the privilege of digging up the ground. Agassiz said he would dig it up, foot by foot, and replace the earth exactly as he found it; but McLaughlin did not care to have this done and he refused Agassiz's offer, although, as he says: "I know better now; I didn't then!"

Agassiz found one great vertebra, so large that a man could thrust his fist through the spinal canal. When one recalls that the marrow bone of the largest bullock will scarcely admit the insertion of a finger, we can imagine what a colossal brute this vertebra must have been part of. From the vertebra, Agassiz estimated that the animal was some 40 feet in length, 20 feet in height and 16 feet across.

In 1865 Prof. Nathaniel Shaler of Cambridge also paid a visit to Mr. McLaughlin and he took away from the Springs a wagon-load of the bones. Again, a Dr. Graham of Louisville,—

soon after this,—although over 90 years of age, came to hunt bones. The doctor, it is stated, was still an ardent scientist and he soon procured a large number of bones. These he carted down to Hamilton and loaded aboard a shanty-boat, intending to float down with them to Louisville. Before he got started, his shanty-boat, with bones and all, was stolen.

McLaughlin often found bones himself and has presented a valuable collection to the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History. He speaks of the great head of a mammoth, almost intact, which he came across while digging, one day. The bones crumble immediately the air strikes them, and unless skilled hands do the work it is almost useless to attempt to remove them. For this reason Mr. McLaughlin did not uncover more of the head, which he estimates was about the size of a large shed or out-house.

Again, while sinking a "gum" over one of the sulphur-springs, he discovered a large tusk. This also he did not attempt to uncover or remove. A gum, it should be explained, is a section of a large, hollow sycamore, or other tree, sunk in the ground over a spring. Through this the water can bubble up freely and with a greatly accelerated flow.

The soil in the valley, McLaughlin used to relate, has, first of all, about 12 feet of ordinary ground, which has to be dug through; then a five-foot layer of blue clay. Beneath this is the "slush" or swamp-ground, in which the bones and relics are preserved, while the whole rests on a bed of soap-stone. McLaughlin accounted for the finding of the bones within the small radius of the valley only as being due to the presence of the sulphur springs. When, in olden days, the monsters came there to drink the waters they often got mired in the valley,—which was then a swamp. There they died,—unable, by reason of their great bulk, to extricate themselves.

Although so much has been taken away, there are yet numberless specimens of bones in the valley, if any one cares to dig them up.

Such, then, is the story of the mastodons at Big Bone. But those who go mastodon-hunting today find their task increased manifold. Just a mile from Big Bone, on the country road, the descent is steep. There is one vast, broad, beautiful valley, opening off on the right,—through the trees,—to expose a country of corn-shocks and of corn-fields, with the lines of the green "sucker" tobacco making a patch-work of it. Set along this pike are the five little two-room frames of Big Bone. There you begin your bone-hunting. The post-mistress has some

bones, and, if she hasn't, she knows who may have. Two or three other villagers drop in and they are ready to talk "bones" always.

The little general-store has some bones at all times in stock and the proprietor brings these out. One is a vertebra, a huge affair. Then there is a tri-ridged tooth, another monster. These were found across from here, in the creek. In a show-case there is a shoulder-blade. Over yonder there is a knuckle-joint. And see,—this is a vertebra, which was broken off in some way. The bones are varnished with a brown shellac. Some of these have been found by washing off sub-soil in the creek. Yes indeed, they still find bones,—accidentally,—every once in a while. In addition there are scientists who come a'purpose to look for them. One man excavated in the creek, they state, and found two tusks, 16 feet in length. He left them there on the chance of some one coming to buy, and before long they were gone.

Big Bone is a sleepy Kentucky village and so, as yet, no one has made a business of getting bones for the selling. When, occasionally, a bone is found,—well and good,—they dispose of it. Joe Rice, for example, found a tusk, 9 feet in length, and he got a good price for it.

By and by they show you what they call the "bone-yard," the valley where a cow is grazing. Two hundred yards across, a marsh throughout, will cover it. What it may still hold none can foretell. Some day some expedition will come and dig, as scientists dig, alone, and then who can foresay what Big Bone will not show to the world?