

ART. VIII.—*Dr. Koch and the Missouri Mastodon*; by EDMUND ANDREWS, M.D., Professor of Surgery in the Chicago Medical College.

THE recent article of Professor Dana on the credibility of Dr. Koch's statement respecting the occurrence of human remains with those of the Mastodon in Missouri is a timely contribu-

tion, for many scientific men still quote Koch's testimony, as though it had never been impeached. The following facts were laid before the Chicago Academy of Sciences by Professor P. Hoy of Racine, Wisconsin, a well known scientist, and one whose honor and truth are above every shade of suspicion.

Many years ago, Professor Hoy visited the spot from which Dr. Koch had exhumed the skeleton now in the British Museum. He found the men who assisted him at the work and took their account of it. He himself also excavated and recovered some fragments of the skeleton missed by Dr. Koch.

It will be remembered (see Professor Dana's article on Dr. Koch's pamphlets) that the discoverer of this skeleton claims to have found it overlaid by one stratum of alluvium, one of marl, three of clay, and three of conglomerate, amounting to some fourteen feet of deposits above the bones. Professor Hoy states that this whole list of strata is a pure fiction. The skeleton was found close to the surface, with nothing but the surface muck over it. The men who assisted at the exhumation also informed Dr. Hoy that Dr. Koch did not drain the spot, as might have been done without great difficulty, but that he and they simply dug out the muck and earth, often working up to their waists in the water, and groping with their hands at the bottom to find the bones. In these circumstances it is obvious, aside from the question of veracity, that no accurate determination could have been made between flint weapons of later date and those which might be contemporaneous with the animal.

There seems no *à priori* improbability in the idea that the mastodon may have survived until after the advent of man upon this continent, but it is evident that Dr. Koch's testimony contributes nothing to the solution of that question.

The following fact may throw light on the burnt skeleton in Gasconade County, without impeaching Dr. Koch's testimony as to the scorched condition of those bones. The Western States are much more subject to long droughts than the Atlantic States or European countries. Here it is a common thing, in very dry seasons, for a peat-bed to be accidentally set on fire and completely burned up. In these cases all the bones in it are scorched, trees growing on it are undermined, and fall over, and any stone implements, or other incombustible objects lying on the surface sink down among the more ancient relics below. Afterward, the peat grows again, covering them all up; or sometimes the freshets of neighboring streams fill the hollow with clay and other river detritus. The skeleton in Gasconade County may have been scorched in this way, and

AM. JOUR. SCI.—THIRD SERIES, VOL. X, NO. 55.—JULY, 1875.

stones and arrowheads of a later age mingled with the bones. In examining the relics found in western swamps, it is always necessary to guard against the possibility of error introduced by the action of fires of this character.

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