

# Profitable Business in Antiquarian Frauds

## AMERICA THE DISTRIBUTING CENTER OF CHEATS, HOAXES AND FAKES BY WHICH SHREWD SWINDLERS HAVE GOT RICH



COUNTERFEIT. AZTEC IDOLS

BY JOHN ELFRETH WATKINS.

**T**HE present scandal about the withdrawal of the two paintings, "Old Mill at St. Cloud" and "Near Newport," from the Smithsonian National Gallery, by William T. Evans, the donor who has caused the arrest of the artist dealer who sold these alleged forgeries as works of the late Homer D. Martin, recalls numerous enterprises in forged and spurious art works and antiquities which have been exposed by the scholars of the Smithsonian and of other noted institutions.

Some time ago a man tried to sell the Smithsonian's bureau of American ethnology an elaborate collection of alleged idols, tablets, and caskets, said to have been dug out of no less than 182 Michigan mounds. They bore a jumble of Oriental hieroglyphics, explained as having been probably employed by a mixed colony of Egyptians, Phenicians and Assyrians, who in the remote past found their way from the cradle of the human race, in Asia, across the seas, up the St. Lawrence and Lakes to Michigan. Some months ago Professor F. W. Kelsey, of the University of Michigan, found that one large private collector had purchased 50 specimens coming from this same forger. These included tablets bearing rudely executed scenes from the Biblical story of the deluge and a copper-plate alleged to have been found on a skull. These pictures and the forger's inevitable Oriental hieroglyphics, always turned upside down, at once called to Professor Kelsey's mind a call which he received in 1888 from a dilapidated man with two trunks and a huge box containing a few human bones and a miscellaneous collection of clay idols, tablets, etc., bearing similar scenes from the "Deluge" and the same reversed hieroglyphics; also a large seated idol of baked clay holding a tablet. The mysterious stranger, after showing certificates signed by persons claiming to have seen these articles dug out of mounds in Michigan, asked \$1000 for the lot, and being laughed at, came down to Ego. Being assured that they were spurious, he asked to be allowed to leave them temporarily, but he has never yet returned to claim them. The professor also found in the trunks show tickets and handbills advertising "The Finest Collection of Prehistoric Relics Ever Exhibited in the United States." Upon examination he found the same reversed hieroglyphics which had appeared upon a lot of alleged antiquities said to have been excavated in Montcalm County, Michigan in 1880, and which he had investigated at the time. Great excitement reigned in that county when these "finds" were announced and people were making the dirt by in every direction over a wide area. One man dug so deep that a cave-in swallowed him up and snuffed out his life.

### Made by Sign Painter.

Among the specimens exhibited were 20 caskets a foot to a yard long and covers ornamented with grotesque figures in relief and the sides with the inverted hieroglyphics, which, for the saving of time, the forger had stamped on with a die. There were also some 25 tablets with the same characters, a few crude vases and a small sphinx, all made of unbaked clay which would soon have melted if exposed to damp earth. A syndicate of unscrupulous antiquarians was formed to excavate and sell other such prehistoric art works alleged to be hidden in the tract, but upon exposure by Professor Alfred Emerson, of Lake Forest College, the stockholders pocketed their losses and repudiated the enterprise. The chief promoter of the fraud was later found to be one Scottfield, a sign painter, of Montcalm County, who has for the past few years lived in Detroit. Profiting by the scientific exposures of his unbaked clay figures, which could not have withstood long burial, he next baked the clay, as in the case of the specimens brought to Professor Kelsey, but more recently has been dealing in "prehistoric" copper "relics" artificially corroded and covered to collectors all over the country.

### Aging "Aztec Antiquities."

An even more prolific distributing center of this kind was exposed some time ago by Professor W. H. Holmes, chief of the Bureau of Ethnology, who refused the Michigan "relics" and who, as curator of our new National gallery has been interested in the weeding out of its alleged forged paintings. These Mexican counterfeiters have supplied museums the world over with "prehistoric" art relics carved out of wood, stone and metal. One, plying his trade in the valley of Mexico, supplies ancient Aztec musical instruments wrought with amazing cleverness from worm-eaten wood. Other spurious relics turned out from these centers are Aztec vases made out from San Juan, to whose surfaces have been added casts taken from other specimens of conventional designs more quickly applied with stamps. The counterfeit after finishing his ware goes it by burying it for a while in moist earth, or by washing it with a thin solution of clay. Counterfeit Aztec vases were dug up in connection with Teotihuacan, the principal center of dis-

tribution, sell in the City of Mexico for \$15. One sent to the National Museum was alleged to have been found 12 feet down by a man digging a well; another was alleged to have been picked up in a cavern beneath an Aztec pyramid.

### Made \$12 an Hour With Common Pincers.

Marvelous specimens of chipped flint which have been sold broadcast over the country for a number of years and some of which found their way to the Smithsonian archaeologists, have been more recently traced to a farm in Dane County, Wisconsin, by A. E. Jenks, of the Bureau of Ethnology. He thought the counterfeit had been in his laboratory, where he was waxing rich at his trade. The farm is occupied by a Norwegian widow with three daughters and three sons, one of the latter, Lewis Erickson, being the manufacturer of the spurious flint-knives, fishhooks, cleavers, spear and arrowheads—a thousand of which had been sold for from \$2 to \$4 apiece. All were wrought from flint found in the neighborhood, with a chipping instrument consisting of a pair of common pincers with one jaw rounded and flattened. To give the stone an aged appearance the counterfeiters smeared the freshly-chipped surface with earth applied with his thumb and by thus plying his trade he earned sometimes \$12 an hour. In a few years he cleared the farm of its mortgage and then had built a large new house for the family.

A comfortable living was made by another counterfeiter who up to a few years ago turned out spurious Indian pipes at Flag Pond, Va., but he overplayed his part and made them in designs requiring much higher art than the Indian ever developed. A Philadelphia dealer until recently, a distributing center for fake Indian axes and Indiana had another from which emanated various excellent slate carvings and ornaments, all spurious but sold as antiques.

### Teeth Betrayed "Ossified Woman."

An alleged "ossified woman" was brought to Washington some years ago by a man who had paid \$500 for it. He submitted it to several scientists of the Smithsonian for examination, among them F. A. Lucas, the well-known anatomist. The ossified lady's jaw was dropped, as in death, and her two front teeth were exposed. As soon as Mr. Lucas had focused his critical eye upon these incisors he pronounced the specimen a fraud. "They are both left teeth," said he. The owner paled a little, but was not satisfied. The scientists told him that an absolute test could be made only by boring into the stone-hearted beauty, and the owner agreed, provided this could be done without defacement. So her ladyship was turned upon her face, and a drill applied to the crease under her bent knee. The drill was of the tubular sort, and when pulled out betrayed a generous thickness of cement below which was a button of the lady's skeleton, which proved to be of gas pipe.

### The San Diego Giant.

The mummy of the "tallest human giant who ever lived" was being barbed by a side-showman at the Atlanta Exposition while a number of these Smithsonian scientists were there. They asked permission to examine it, and when consent was given, applied their tapes and found that it measured eight feet four inches from crown to heel. The giant had been found in a cave near San Diego, Cal., by a party of prospectors, according to the exhibitor. Over the head were the remains of a leather hood, which appeared to have been part of a shroud. Worn teeth were visible in the mouth, and the outlines of the ribs were plainly seen through the skin. The elongated emaciated body stood erect in the cave, and the exhibitor, who has for the past few years lived in Detroit, profiting by the scientific exposures of his unbaked clay figures, which could not have withstood long burial, he next baked the clay, as in the case of the specimens brought to Professor Kelsey, but more recently has been dealing in "prehistoric" copper "relics" artificially corroded and covered to collectors all over the country.



SAN DIEGO GIANT

a petrified giant, 10 1/2 feet tall, upon the farm of one Newell, near Cardiff, Oregon. Newell stated that he uncovered the monster while digging a well. A tent was promptly placed over the pit and an admission fee charged. People swarmed about the scene and fought for admission to the tent within which they saw lying five feet below the surface an enormous figure with massive features, its limbs contracted as if in agony. Its color indicated that it had lain long in the earth, and over its surface were miniature punctures, like pores. The appearance of great age was furthered by a pair of grooves on the under side, apparently worn by water, which trickled along the rock upon which the giant lay. A spirit of reverence enveloped visitors once they were inside the tent. They hardly spoke above a whisper. The good country people found corroboration of the Biblical text. There were giants in those days. The admission fees soon netted Newell \$150,000, and a joint stock company was formed to exhibit the giant about the country. Among the leading spirits in this enterprise was the original of Westcott's character, "David Harum." "Colonel" Wood, an eminent showman, was engaged to exhibit the "Cardiff Giant," as it was called, and it was exhibited in New York City and in other centers. Barnum tried to purchase it, and finally had a copy made which he exhibited as the "Cardiff Giant." Professor James Hull, the State Geologist, examined the original and gave a favorable opinion, but Professor Marsh of Yale, pronounced it a fake. The more skeptical people of the neighborhood watched Newell's movements, and he was detected in sending considerable sums to one Hull, his brother-in-law, in the West. At length Hull confessed that he got his inspiration of the fraud while listening to a revivalist, who insisted that "there were giants in those days." A huge piece of gypsum was found by Hull near Fort Dodge, Ia. This he had transported to Chicago, where a German stone-carver wrought the giant, its pores being made with a leaden mallet faced with steel needles. After being stained with an aging preparation, the giant was transported to a town in New York State, whence Hull hauled it to Newell's farm at Cardiff by team. Newell sent his family on a trip covering the time of the giant's arrival and burial. Hull, who was a religious skeptic, was undaunted by the exposure, and felt that he had gotten even with the revivalist who preached the giant doctrine. Even after his confession, the Rev. Alexander McWhorter and Professor White, both of Yale, continued to believe in the giant's antiquity, the former announcing that it was a Phoenician idol upon which he had found an important inscription. One of those who from the first branded the giant as a hoax was Andrew D. White, president of Cornell.

### Colorado "Petrified Missing Link."

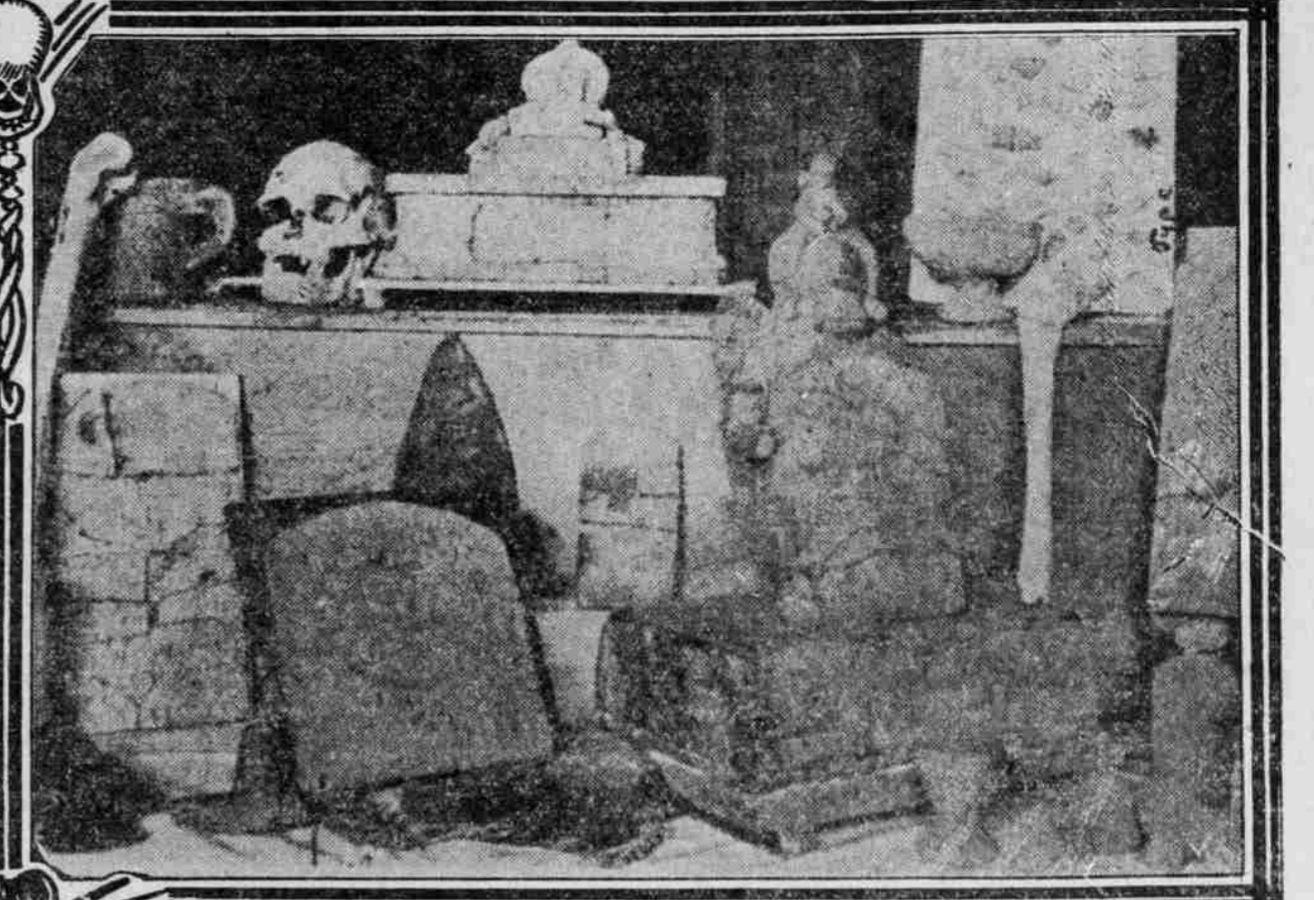
Shortly afterward a petrified "missing link" was alleged to have been dug up in Colorado. It had a tall and ape-like legs and feet. Professor Marsh went to see it and it was discovered to be the work of the same Hull, promoter of the Cardiff Giant hoax. The present specimen was of clay, baked in a furnace, and containing human bones. This he had buried and "discovered" in Colorado. Another petrified man was alleged to have been found in the Pine River region of Michigan in 1873 by one William Riddick, of St. Clair County, that state. This was found to be of cement. It was an echo of the Cardiff Giant, as was another "petrified man" alleged to have been found near Bathurst, Australia, and taken to Sydney, where it was exhibited in 1880.

### Dr. Koch's Sea Serpent.

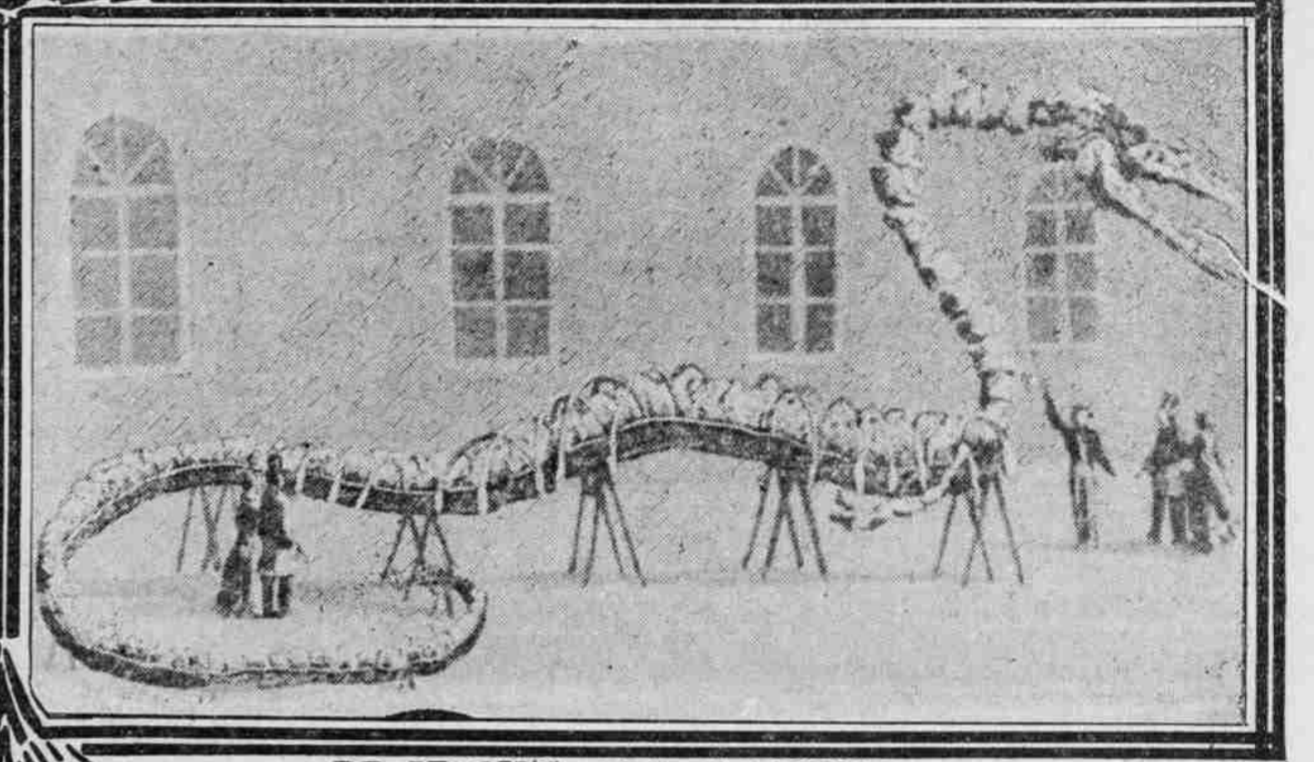
A sea serpent 114 feet long, called the "hydrarches" or "sea king," was exhibited in skeleton form on Broadway, New York by Dr. Albert C. Koch in 1845. Great excitement prevailed at the time, and it was accepted as genuine until Professor Wyman carefully examined it. The party paddled on, however, in search of larger game, and at the mouth of the Vovitna River information gained from an intelligent Indian, who had visited the headwaters of this stream on hunting excursions, that he had seen "big horns and other big bones" on the river banks and had picked up the "shank bone" of some large animal, lured them into a side trip up the river. Three days up the traveling turned bad and a cache had to be made of all articles not absolutely needed.

### Where the Party Traveled.

The party was gone in all about four months, during which nearly the entire length of the Yukon River was covered, and several of its tributaries partly explored. Close upon 1400 miles of the distance was traveled by canoe. During the whole time search was made along the cliffs and in the river bars, as being the places most likely to show relics of early beasts. Mining camps were also visited on the way for possible traces of significant bones. The course was laid through Skagway on the upper part of the river, by train to White Horse, then by steamer through Dawson to Rampart, whence came some ancient bison skulls now in the United States National Museum. Rampart marked the beginning of the long journey by canoe. For 30 or 40 miles below Rampart the Yukon flows between walls of older rocks at from five to six miles an hour, tumbling faster and faster down toward the rapids. But the rapids once passed,



FAKE PREHISTORIC RELICS FROM MICHIGAN



DR. KOCH'S SEA-SERPENT



OLD MILL AT ST. CLOUD ALLEGED FORGERY JUST WITHDRAWN FROM NATIONAL GALLERY

Fort Gibbon is reached, below which lie the now well-known Fallsades, dubbed in that region the "boneyard," for from it have been dug broken remnants of many early beasts.

The party here spent two days gathering remains from the frozen cliffs 150 to 200 feet high. The almost perpendicular faces of the cliffs are being continually undermined by the swift current. Large masses break off, many times with a startling report and splash as they fall into the water below. "Often during the stay here," says Mr. Gilmore, "the report sounded so like the firing of a gun that we were startled by the sharpness of it."

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It is a picturesque region. "Often the water has cut in under the bank," says Mr. Gilmore, "which extends out over the stream like a great shelf. The trees growing on these undermined banks frequently lean far over and dip their tops in the water before being carried away. Large blocks of the bank, covered with bushes and trees, cave off into the stream, where they remain standing half-submerged for a long time. Frequently these hang down from the top of these undermined banks a mantle of moss which serves as a curtain to hide the destruction by miners in search of gold. The party struggled up the Nowitna River for nine days, hunting for the

source of all the pieces of ancient bones found washed down from somewhere above. No settlers were met with, and only an occasional deserted winter cabin of a lonely trapper showed that man had ever scrambled along the banks or pushed a paddle in the stream. Food began to give out, so that they were forced to turn back before reaching the headwaters. The slide trip, however, was not without results, for from nearly every bar searched was taken a fragment or a complete element of a skeleton representing such extinct forms as the mammoth, bison and horse.

Stopping at Mouse Point and at Kooker, an Indian settlement and trading post, they paddled down into a region of towering cliffs. In places the banks rise 200 to 250 feet and from them were taken now and then a skull or a tusk or a tooth of some forgotten animal. Anvik was visited, and then Andrewsask, where the canoe trip ended.

The rest of the journey was on steamer to St. Michael, Nome and finally Seattle. Results of the Expedition. It was found that the scattered remains of the very early animals occur throughout the heart of Alaska not constantly covered by ice and snow, in three quite distinct deposits: First, in the black muck accumulated in gulches and the valleys of the smaller streams; second, in the fine elevated clays of early origin, known as the Yukon silts and Kowak clays; and third, in the more recent deposits along the banks of streams. These specimens have been either washed out by the process of erosion or dug out by miners in search of gold.

The fossil bones secured came from localities on the Bonanza Creek, Little Minkoek Creek, the Fallsades of the Yukon, the Nowitna River, the Yukakakat River and the Klappanukak River. In connection with the "bone yard" of the Fallsades, and with Elephant Point farther north, it has been thought that there might be enough ivory in old buried mammoth tusks to pay for its excavation and shipping for commercial purposes, as is the case in some localities of Siberia. In fact, mammoth tusks for a good many years have been an important export of Siberia. But the Alaskan remains are not in as fresh a state of preservation, and until a few years ago it is said, a man would not take a tusk as a gift. Now they are used to manufacture curios of different sorts.

### How the Animals Died.

How the ancient animals whose remains are now picked up piece by piece along the rivers, died, has been a subject of speculation. Mr. Maddren believed they met their end on the shores of glacial lakes, and that their bones, carried out on the ice in the spring break-up, were dropped here and there as the ice melted, becoming imbedded in the silt. Mr. Gilmore, however, believes that since the best specimens have been found in gulches and valleys of smaller streams, and are more common in muck than in silt, these animals probably at some ancient period became mired in prehistoric bogs, then not frozen as now. The bones were afterwards probably separated by the "flowing" or "creeping" of the muck. Washington, D. C., May 14.

## Hunting Extinct Animals in Alaska

What Smithsonian Institute Learned in Expedition Down Great Yukon.

**A**ZOOLOGICAL expedition to Alaska sent out by the Smithsonian Institution last season, and conducted by C. W. Gilmore of the United States National Museum, has brought back, besides interesting information, many fragments of bones of early animals, of varieties no longer living there. Although there is not in the lot material from which can be reconstructed ancient genera hitherto unknown, the specimens show that over the Alaska fields at a period long before man arrived on earth, roamed mammoths, several kinds of buffalo, musk oxen, sheep, moose, caribou, horses and bears. Beavers also built their dams along the rivers. The official report of the trip will be published in the series of "Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections" at about the same time as the appearance of this article. Ever since Otto von Kotzebue, nearly a century ago, brought back from Alaska a few pieces of skulls and bones of strange extinct beasts, men of science have looked upon that region as a possible source of information concerning the early ancestors of our Northern American animals. Much has been written about it. Little systematic was done, however, until 1904, when the Smithsonian Institution sent

its first expedition under A. G. Maddren. This trip was so fruitful that the institution last season dispatched a second expedition, in charge of C. W. Gilmore, which, while following a course similar to that of the first, was directed to search for the remains of the large extinct vertebrate animals and to investigate the causes leading to their extinction. Where the Party Traveled. The party was gone in all about four months, during which nearly the entire length of the Yukon River was covered, and several of its tributaries partly explored. Close upon 1400 miles of the distance was traveled by canoe. During the whole time search was made along the cliffs and in the river bars, as being the places most likely to show relics of early beasts. Mining camps were also visited on the way for possible traces of significant bones. The course was laid through Skagway on the upper part of the river, by train to White Horse, then by steamer through Dawson to Rampart, whence came some ancient bison skulls now in the United States National Museum. Rampart marked the beginning of the long journey by canoe. For 30 or 40 miles below Rampart the Yukon flows between walls of older rocks at from five to six miles an hour, tumbling faster and faster down toward the rapids. But the rapids once passed,