

THE DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS.

The *ornithorhynchus* or platypus is a singular animal, which seems to form a connecting link between the mammals and birds, and in some respects having affinities even with reptiles. It is from 18 to 22 inches long, and has a stubby tail 5 inches long. The color is brown above and whitish below. The jaws are inclosed in a horny sheath, very sensitive, like the bill of a duck, and have two horny teeth on each side; the snout is flat and broad, the lower jaw shorter and narrower, the eyes small and brilliant; ears not apparent externally, with an aperture that can be opened or shut at will; and the fur is soft and thick, like that of the otter. The legs are short, and the feet five toed, and webbed. It secretes milk for the nourishment of its young, which are born blind and naked. It burrows in the banks of streams, where it passes the day in sleep, rolled up like a ball, coming out at dusk and during the night in search of food. It is an excellent swimmer and diver, and feeds upon worms, insects, and small aquatic animals, in the manner of a duck. It walks very well, and climbs trees with facility. It can remain under water for eight minutes at a time; it is cleanly in habit, and fond of warmth and dryness. The young die very soon in confinement.



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Poisoning by Earrings.

Two young girls in Paris suffered from blepharitis, and one of them also from an inflammation of the lower part of the left auricle. All the usual remedies proved inefficacious, but both patients quickly recovered after their copper earrings were discarded.

PROPOSED BALLOON VOYAGE TO THE NORTH POLE.

We find in the London *Graphic* the annexed engraving of an arrangement of balloons proposed by Mr. Henry Coxwell of England as a means of crossing the Palæocrystic Sea and so reaching the north pole. Our contemporary attributes to Commander Cheyne, R. N., the origination of the idea of using balloons for this purpose. It is believed that the three balloons connected in the manner shown in our engraving would carry six men, besides three tons weight of gear, boat cars, stores, provisions, tents, sledges, dogs, compressed gas, and ballast. The triangular framework connecting the balloons would be fitted with foot ropes, so that the occupants could go from one balloon to another in the same manner as sailors lie out upon the yards of a ship, and the balloons would be equipoised by means of bags of ballast suspended from this framework, and hauled to the required position by ropes. Trail ropes would be attached to the balloons, so as to prevent their ascent above a certain height (about 500 feet), at which elevation they would be balanced in the air, the spare ends of the ropes trailing over

the ice. The boat cars would be housed in for warmth; and telegraphic communication kept up with the ships by means of a wire uncoiled from a large wheel (see sketch) as the balloons moved onward. This wire, being marked at every five miles, would also serve to keep a record of the distance traversed. Commander Cheyne proposes that the balloons should start about the end of May, on the curve of a wind circle, of known diameter, ascertained approximately by me-

teorological observations conducted on board the vessel, and at two observatories some thirty miles distant in opposite directions. It is estimated that, with a knowledge of the diameter of the wind circle, and the known distance from the Pole, the balloons could be landed within at least twenty miles of the long wished-for goal. There the balloons would be securely moored; and when the necessary observations at the Pole had been carried out, a return wind would be secured for their return, the requisite full inflation having been made by means of the surplus gas taken out in a compressed condition. The returning voyagers would arrest their course to the southward on the parallel of latitude on which they left their ship, and the remainder of their journey, east or west, would be performed by means of the dogs and sledges conveyed in the balloons.

Recent Archaeological Discoveries.

In a volume on "Notes on the Barrows and Bone Caves of Derbyshire," Mr. Rooke Pennington, the author, gives some interesting facts in regard to explorations made near Castleton. The surrounding country is dotted with tumuli, usually rough, round heaps of stone and turf and some of a peculiar oblong shape. The large mounds are about fifty feet in diameter and five feet high in the center. Their con-

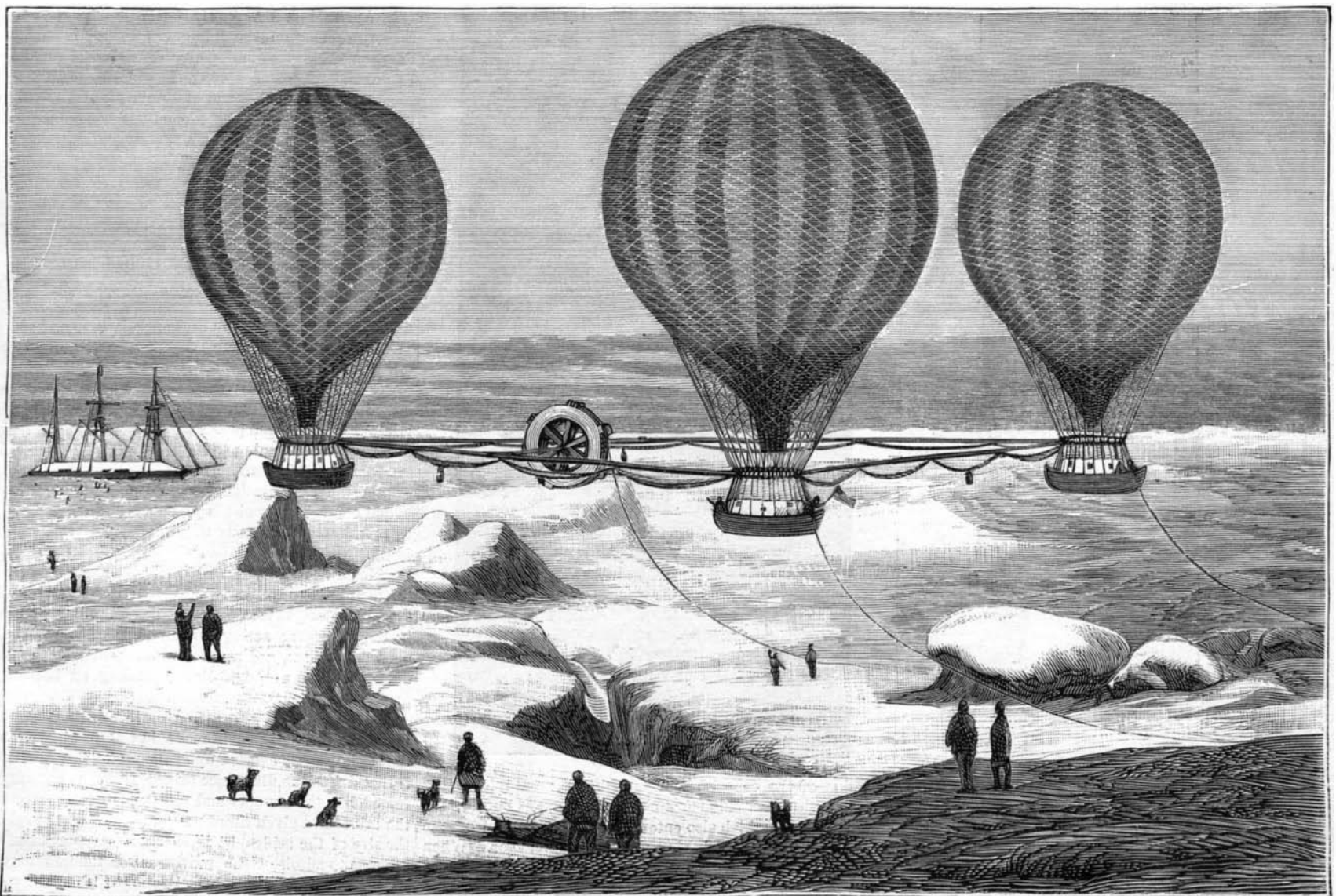
tents are all the evidence in existence as to the beliefs, practices and social life of men who tenanted the British Islands in the neolithic or polished stone and bronze periods of culture. In one barrow was found a stone cist made of six rough slabs, four for the sides and two for top and bottom. Fragments of pottery with rude scratches for ornamentation laid scattered around the bones of an old man. Near by and in the very center was found in a shallow grave the skeleton of a young man, buried in a crouching position. Large pieces of limestone were piled around and there were many bones of the short-horned ox, the boar and the horse. It was evident the young man was one of high rank, both from the high mound and the bones of the animals, which were, Mr. Pennington thinks, the remains of a funeral feast. An awl made of stag horn and a jet ornament were the only personal articles found.

In a recent number of the *Athenæon* is a short summary of the discoveries which have been recently made in tombs at Spata in Attica, Greece. To the south of the village a square chamber cut in the rock was found accidentally at a depth of about 17 feet from the surface. On the eastern and northern sides of this chamber were smaller ones. The door leading into the great chamber was walled up with small stones and earth, a small aperture being left at the top; the entrance to the two smaller chambers was free. In clearing out the passage were found many objects in glass or ivory and a few in silver, gold, bronze and terracotta; also a few ashes and bones. These objects were found scattered about in the earth, as if the tomb had been anciently sacked and some of its contents dropped by the plunderers in their way out. In the northwest corner a layer of ashes and burnt bones was found intact.

A Patent Law for Switzerland.

Switzerland and Holland are the only two European nations that at the present time refuse to inventors the protection of patents. Holland, it seems, is soon to be left alone in that glory. A bill is now under discussion, prepared by Federal Councillor Droz, which if passed will give to the republic of Switzerland a patent law system very much like that of the United States. The fees for patents are to be small, and the mode of securing inventions simple. We shall give our readers due notice of the passage of the Swiss patent law.

CHARCOAL FOR OFFENSIVE BREATH.—A correspondent of the *Dental Cosmos* says that the best treatment in regard to offensive breath is the use of pulverized charcoal, two or three tablespoonfuls per week, taken in a glass of water before retiring for the night.



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