

the "gran seco," or the great drought, in South America; and according to Darwin, the loss of cattle in the province of Buenos Ayres alone was calculated at 1,000,000 head. One proprietor at San Pedro, in the middle of the finest pasture-country, had lost 20,000 cattle previously to those years. "I was informed by an eye witness," he adds, "that the cattle, in herds of thousands, rushed into the Parana, and, being exhausted by hunger, they were unable to crawl up the muddy banks, and thus were drowned. The arm of the river which runs by San Pedro was so full of putrid carcasses, that the master of a vessel told me that the smell rendered it quite impassable. All the small rivers became highly saline, and this caused the death of vast numbers in particular spots; for when an animal drinks of such water it does not recover. Azara describes the fury of the wild horses on a similar occasion: rushing into the marshes, those which arrived first being overwhelmed and crushed by those which followed."* The upright position in which the various specimens of *Megatheria* were found indicates some such cause of death; as if the ponderous animal, approaching the banks of the river, when shrunk within its banks, had been bogged in soft mud, sufficiently adhesive to hold it there till it perished.

Like the *Megatherium*, the *Myiodon* closely resembled the Sloth, and it belonged exclusively to the New World. Smaller than the *Megatherium*, it differed from it chiefly in the form of the teeth. These organs presented only molars with smooth surfaces, indicating that the animal fed on vegetables, probably the leaves and tender buds of trees. As the *Myiodon* presents at once hoofs and claws on each foot, it has been thought that it formed the link between the hoofed or ungulated animals and the Edentates. Three species are known, which lived in the pampas of Buenos Ayres.

In consequence of some hints given by the illustrious Washington, Mr. Jefferson, one of his successors as President of the United States, discovered, in a cavern of Western Virginia, the bones of a species of gigantic Sloth, which he pronounced to be the remains of some carnivorous animal. They consisted of a femur, a humerus, an ulna, and three claws, with half a dozen other bones of the foot. These bones Mr. Jefferson believed to be analogous to those of the lion. Cuvier saw at once the true analogies of the animal. The bones were the remains of a species of gigantic Sloth; the complete skeleton of which was subsequently discovered in the Mississippi, in such a perfect state of preservation that the cartilages, still adhering

* "Journal of Researches," &c., 2nd ed., p. 133. Charles Darwin.