

Mr. PARFITT, the Curator of the Society, then read a paper on the "Pouched Marmot," remains of which species have recently been identified by Hugh Falconer, Esq., M.D., among the Mendip Cave bones forming a part of the Williams' collection in the Museum of this Society. These remains consist of two right rami of the lower jaw, which are the only portions yet discovered in this country of the *Spermophilus erythrogenoides*. In the present day, the Altaï mountains are known as the habitat of the representatives of this species—the pouched marmot.

"The formation of a portion of the Altaï mountains is something similar to the Mendips and Quantocks, being apparently the equivalent of the old red sandstone, scarfed with carboniferous limestone, and it is in the chinks and holes of the latter these animals live gregariously or in

small societies. The Altaï mountains occupy an area of about 40,000 geographical square miles—a wide space for these little creatures to move about in, compared to the narrow limits of the Mendips, if confined to these hills in England. The height of the snow line of the Altaï chain is not very satisfactorily ascertained, but it is probable that its general elevation does not fall short of 8,000 feet. At the town of Fykalka, situated in the southern slope, at the height of 4,000 feet above the sea, the land is cultivated with success, yielding barley, rye, oats, millet, and summer wheat, besides garden vegetables.

“The writer of the article ‘Altaï,’ in the *Imperial Gazetteer*, says a marmot peculiar to these regions abounds in the vicinity of the snow. These animals are preyed upon by the glutton and the bear. The royal tiger prowls through the steppes on the south, and haunts particularly the reedy shores of Lake Balkhash ; it is not unlikely, therefore, that his predatory incursions sometimes extends into the Altaï. How exceedingly like the picture of our Altaï, the Mendips of some ages ago ! although I am somewhat inclined to think that this marmot might have lived down to the period when man took possession of this island, and indeed to, perhaps, ages afterwards. These animals being used as food, even now, were most likely used as such by the early inhabitants of this country, and very likely became extinct through man’s agency.

“The climate of the Altaï, where these animals are found, does not imply that the climate of England has undergone any material change since these animals inhabited the Mendips, and the tigers roamed along its slopes, or the deer or Irish elk bounded over the plains. Analagous animals are still found proximately inhabiting the Altaï chain, while we know that at a period probably long after

the extinction of the cave hyæna, bear, and the great *Elephas primigenius* and the rhinoceros, in England, these elephants and rhinoceri found appropriate food in the birch and spruce forests of Siberia.

“The dental formula of the genus *Spermophilus* is exceedingly like that of the common squirrel, the molars of the lower jaw very much so ; so that a fragment, or even one ramus, without the incisors, would be somewhat difficult to determine. The incisors would at once settle the question, as they are much longer and stronger in every way. The upper jaw is different, the squirrel having only four molars, while the marmot has five on each side. In their natural arrangement they are arranged by systematists, close together ; in fact, the marmots are called by the natives generally ‘ground squirrels.’”

---