

sometimes transformed into stones. "These bones," the historian gravely tells us, "were both black and white, and born of the earth." Some of the elephant's bones having a slight resemblance to those of man, they have often been mistaken for human bones. In the earlier historic times these great bones, accidentally disinterred, have passed as having belonged to some hero or demigod; at a later period they were thought to be the bones of giants. We have already spoken of the mistake made by the Greeks in taking the patella of a fossil elephant for the knee-bone of Ajax; in the same manner the bones revealed by an earthquake, and attributed by Pliny to a giant, belonged, no doubt, to a fossil elephant. To a similar origin we may assign the pretended body of Orestes, thirteen feet in length, which was dis-

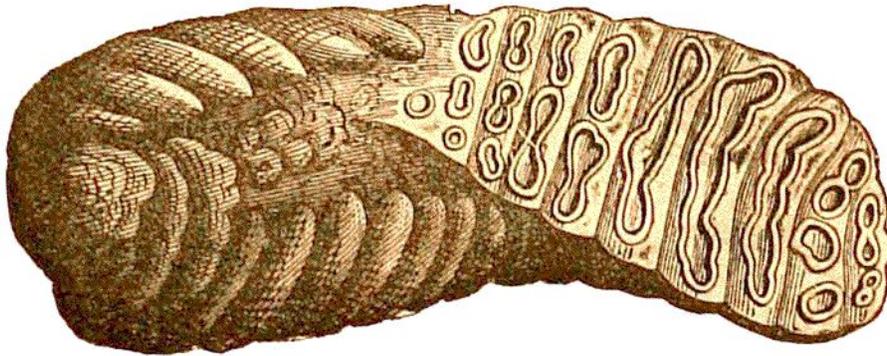


Fig. 181.—Tooth of the Mammoth.

covered at Tegea by the Spartans; those of Asterius, the son of Ajax, discovered in the Isle of Ladea, of ten cubits in length (about eighteen feet), according to Pausanius; finally, such were the great bones found in the Isle of Rhodes, of which Phlegon of Tralles speaks in his "Mundus Subterraneus."

We might fill volumes with the history of the remains of pretended giants found in ancient tombs. The books, in fact, which exist, formed a voluminous literature in the middle ages—entitled *Gigantology*. All the facts, more or less real, true or imaginative, may be explained by the accidental discovery of the bones of some of these gigantic animals. We find in works on *Gigantology*, the history of a pretended giant, discovered in the 4th century, at Trapani in Sicily, of which Boccaccio speaks, and which may be taken for Polyphemus; of another, found in the 16th century, according to Fasellus, near Palermo; others, according to the same author, at Melilli between Leontium and Syracuse, Calatrasi and Petralia, at