

Mammoth Cave.

Mr. Editor:—To such of your readers as were disposed to follow me two weeks ago in my western ramble, I made the promise that I would have something more to say of "Mammoth Cave." Having said something of my journey to that place, I left them at the "mouth of the cave." I now wish to entice such as have never been there, to take a stroll with me through this sepulchral city of silence, for if there is a place more suggestive of the silence of the tomb than these vast caverns, it can hardly be found outside of the catacombs of Rome, but did it ever occur to you how beautifully the sepulchre is sometimes associated with the melodies of life? Bayard Taylor, standing at the tomb of Walter Scott in Westminster Abbey, beautifully expressed this idea when he said, "The harp of the minstrel lingered there still, though the hand that touched it was silenced forever." And so I felt when standing in the great rotunda of the cave, that "silence is buried here," silence so deep and so profound that it was pleasant to listen for a sound that you could not hope to hear. No sign of life, save the fancied flapping of the bats said to infest and hang in great festoons in Audubon's Avenue near by, and no man has ever associated bats with the living; they court silence and silence is death. Thus like a child, knowing little of its history, playing with a great "conch shell" and wondering what it was, I held it to my ear and heard the "roaring of the sea," which will go on until there shall be "no more sea." Then came back to us an echo of our words, causing me to think that of a truth, "Our words can never die." Carved upon the walls and ceilings here and there were hundreds of names of visitors, and I thought that we all leave our names impressed somewhere, and that however humble, we leave some trace that we have lived. Carving our names upon the smooth beeches of the forest surrounding the homes of our childhood, as I have done mine, in later years writing then upon the walls and perpendicular heights of that which is curious and sublime in nature, inscribing them upon the haunts of idleness, defacing with them places of public resort, comfort or necessity, as I have often seen done, giving them sometimes to the annals of our country's history, as many an one has done, or spelling them out to the village newspaper, as I do now, in each case indicative of our love of home, our liking to be conspicuous, our laziness, our lawlessness, our loyalty, or our leisure, and in all cases desiring to do something to be seen by others who follow in our way.

The main cave is from 40 to 300 feet wide and from 35 to 125 feet high, so say the most reliable accounts of exploration, and yet there are passages such as the one called "Fat Man's Misery," through which the Secretary and Treasurer of the town of Hickory could not pass without growing considerably less, and another through which your correspondent could not pass until he had doubled up. This is known as "Tall Man's Misery." The old saltpetre works, built in the cave in 1812, only three years after its discovery, manifest that in all time man has been disposed to explore "seas not his own and worlds unknown before" in search of that which is of utility and profit. These saltpetre vats, though abandoned long ago, seem well preserved by the nitrous earth with which they are filled. Some of the timbers appear perfectly sound. A small cascade falls fifty feet over the entrance to the cave and the water disappears beneath the rocks. In this cavernous limestone of Kentucky water has cut its way to many places beneath the surface yet to be explored and it cannot be doubted that many wonders are yet locked up in dark caverns to prove that the "constant drops will wear the stone." It is plain, even to the un instructed eye, that these many winding subterranean avenues and vast high vaulted rooms are the eroding work of water in some remote period of geological formation, and when our guide suddenly stopped and called us to listen to the water clock, remarking that it "ran down every day," I could not repress the remark, "Does it run with a spring?" He replied, "Just wait (weight) and see." We listened and from the walls of the cavern came the "click, cluck, clock" of nature's great time keeper. I grew romantic and spoke of the "Song of the brook"—"Man may come and man may go, but I go on forever." One of the ladies in the party very quietly and somewhat inconsistently admonished me to "hold my tongue." Another lady became as I thought rather personal when she inquired if I had ever been to Green river, which ran by a short distance outside the cave, hence I subsided. I felt green in fact when later in the day I had bought of a vender of cave curiosities a lot of shells fresh from the cave. They probably came from Green river to be sold to green-horns, but I did get some real cave specimens.

The cave is well ventilated, the air rushing outward in summer and inward in winter. The temperature is uniformly 54 degrees throughout the year and the atmosphere is very pure. In most of the avenues there is absence of moisture. The lower galleries being tributary to Green river, have limped streams of water, cool and refreshing. Two cottages had been erected for the use of invalids, especially consumptives, but they soon went into disuse, for the sick must have sunlight if they would have health. The most attractive of all the rooms is the "Star Chamber," where overhead there is great profusion of white crystals peering through a coating of black oxide, from which starlight prospect the chamber takes its name. Stopping in this chamber at the request of our guide, he took in charge all the lamps with the light of which we had seen our way, and left us in deep darkness. Passing into a recess at one side, the guide, lamps in hand, seemed to go below us. At this juncture and in deep darkness a gentleman present who was known to have provided himself with a remedy said to be good for "snake bites," was accused of having applied the said remedy once a more to allay the cravings of an ignoble appetite. He had only the fear of the ladies before his eyes, and nothing would have been known of his dark deed had not one of the ladies remarked, "You may darken and hide the flask if you will, The scent of the liquor will hang round it still."

That gentleman very promptly, though very un gallantly, announced that "a woman's tongue was sharper than a serpent's tooth." By the reflection of the light below, the guide caused the appearance of the moon to rise, the crystals overhead making good the starry canopy of heaven, over which a cloud floated as he gradually withdrew the light. Then came the deep darkness, then from the noise made by the guide below arose the deep rolling thunder. From a certain angle he flashed the light upon us in fair illustration of lightning. He called back that he did not "think it would rain." From another angle he gradually threw the light into the chamber, the cloud rolled away, the sun came out, and the guide returning, we were in the full glare of light again. At another point he left us in darkness to again practice his magical art. Passing to a point between two sharp angles in the walls of the cavern, and by the reflection of his light upon these angles, he brought before us what he called the "Statue of Martha Washington." The effect was beautiful and better than I have seen magic lantern men make of "Daniel in the lion's den," for without a name our guide's picture would really have suggested the "mother of our country." We were shown a point at which it is said two skeletons were exhumed, but evidences of prehistoric occupancy are very scarce. We were told of mummies having been found there with all the equipments of a former life, but we had no opportunity of consulting these ancient personages for information. The combined length of all the avenues and recesses of the entire cavern are quoted to be from 150 to 250 miles, according to the scruples the narrator may have in sticking as near to the truth as possible, which probably would not allow a statement in excess of 150 miles. An area of one to two acres, covered by a high vault, known as "Chief City," bears evidences of ancient occupancy. Visitors to the cave for one day only must take one or the other of two main lines of exploration, the "short route" requiring three to six hours, the "long route" requiring from eight to twelve hours. In Gothic Avenue we found the chapel a very interesting place, having numerous large stalactites and stalagmites, domes, cascades, &c. At one point we found the alter a formation of stalactites, dropping from ceiling to floor with an arch above. Here it is said nine couples have been married, some of the contracting parties having previously declared that they "never would be married on the face of the earth." "Joseph's Coffin," a block of stone of large proportions and resembling a coffin, attracted attention and became the subject of (poor) remarks, which this writer will not condescend to relate. Notable among the number of vertical shafts that pierce through these caverns from the uppermost galleries to the lowest floor, are Gorin's Dome, regarded as one of the places of greatest interest. Mammoth Dome with its wonderful tapestry of stalactites, the Egyptian Temple with its huge columns near 100 feet high and 25 feet in diameter. Lucy's Dome is said to be the highest of all, being over 300 feet from its lowest depth to the top. In Croghan's Hall we drew near to what is called the "The Bottomless Pit." As we drew near, without irreverence I thought of the hymn beginning, "Stop, poor sinner, stop and think, Before you further go."

The guide threw a turpentine ball into the pit, and as it went flaming down, throwing its light and smoke upward for a distance of 200 feet or more, it occurred to me the question as to whether there is a material hell should be, for all practical purposes, decided in the affirmative, for there I saw a panorama which taken figuratively gives some conception of what the Bible in figure sets forth to be a place of torment. Unlike one who did some years ago allow himself to be let down with a rope to the bottom, I shrank from looking into the place. I am not making sport when I say that at the appearance of this great mailstrom below I looked up and far above and around me I had beautiful sights of the finest stalactites in the cave and a vision of the wealth of crystals so far above me, that whilst I could admire I could not reach, and so I determined not to look into the pit again for its mysteries, but rather to look upward for more desirable things. Not assuming to be a preacher, the moral is plain. Time and space forbid that I should tell of many other places, such as "Fairy Grotto" and other avenues, with other halls canopied in wondrous beauty, such as is hard to describe and would require an artist of the first water to paint. I had thought Cleveland did well and deserved honor when his first manifesto to the American people was, "Tell the truth." I had seen him stand at the head of his party, and much by the force of his individuality attain to the Presidency of this great nation. I had seen him take the oath of of-

fice. The Bible from his mother in hand he extended it to "the estranged ones of this great nation." I had seen him stand stronger than his party and formulate the great issues for which it is contending. I had felt that he was almost unanimously called again to the leadership of the party, and hence as I walked along Cleveland's Cabinet Avenue, I said that as the cave of Adullam had sheltered Israel's greatest King, so Mammoth Cave has honored the greatest of American Presidents. And now the climax of my letter is reached. I may appear again. J. G. HALL.

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