

KENTUCKY'S CAVERN.

A Twenty Miles' Trip Through Subterranean Passages and Chambers.

Mammoth Cave, With a History of Its Phenomena and Wonderful Properties.

Correspondent Cincinnati Commercial.

One of the greatest natural curiosities in the world lies less than two hundred miles from Cincinnati. Residents of this city can reach it in ten hours of pleasant travel, and yet it is safe to say that not one out of every two hundred of the citizens of the Queen City have ever seen it. A hundred people visit Niagara falls to every one who visits the wonderful cavern of Kentucky. There are various reasons for this. First, Niagara is fortunate in being well advertised, while Mammoth Cave, for some reason, seldom sees its name in print. Secondly, Niagara falls is managed for all the money it is capable of bringing to its shrewd agents, whereas Mammoth cave, until very recently, was under the control of non-progressive ideas. Third, Niagara lies uncovered beneath the noonday sun, and distant view of its splendid and always beaming Mammoth Cave is hidden in the darkness depths of the earth, with nothing visible to the outside world but its cavernous mouth. Fourthly, Niagara lies almost in the direct line of travel between the great centers of eastern and western population, and is of comparatively easy access; Mammoth Cave is situated in a wild region of the south, near which no great trade of travel flows, and is eight miles from the nearest railroad station. And yet, in spite of all this, the subterranean exposition of natural wonders is worth more than the time, trouble and money it requires to see it.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE CAVE.

Before attempting to describe any of the wondrous sights of the cave it might be well to briefly set out a few historical facts about it. Mammoth cave is situated in, or rather under Edmonson county, Ky., the center of the wildest section of the state. The noted James brothers, it is said, have several times been in hiding within caverns of the place. There are over seven thousand square miles of limestone formation in this section, and all of it is supposed to be honeycombed by subterranean passages and cavernous halls. The whole county of Edmonson is dotted with sink-holes and nearly four hundred cavern-mouths have been discovered, though most of them give access to but very small caves. Only one entrance has been discovered to Mammoth cave; at least, but one has ever been made public. It is believed the guides could tell of other means of entrance or exit, but it is their business to keep this knowledge, if there be such, to themselves.

THE CAVE LIES UNDER A HIGH TABLE LAND WHICH RISES 312 FEET ABOVE THE WATERS OF GREEN RIVER.

The entrance to the cave is at the end of a ravine back of the Cave hotel, and 118 feet below the building. The visitor goes down a winding path until he arrives at the place where the ravine seems to have run up against a precipitous bluff and knocked the huge hole in the hillside. The hole is the mouth of the cave. It is twenty-four feet in height and thirty wide. A small stream of clear water flows from between the rocks above the opening and falls upon the rocky bed below with pleasing effect. At nearly every season of the year a constant fog or bank of mist obscures the entrance, caused by the meeting of two atmospheres, one of which is colder than the other, and thus condenses the moisture in the air where the meeting takes place. Upon the day we entered the cave the temperature inside and outside happened to be about the same, and the fog was absent, something that rarely occurs.

THE TEMPERATURE OF THE AIR OF THE CAVE NEVER VARIES. UNTIL RECENTLY IT WAS DECLARED THAT THE CONSTANT TEMPERATURE INSIDE THE CAVE, WINTER, SPRING, SUMMER AND AUTUMN, WAS 59° FAHRENHEIT. BUT VERY RECENT SCIENTIFIC TESTS HAVE SHOWN THAT THIS MEASUREMENT WAS MADE AT THE DEGREE TOO HIGH; THE TEMPERATURE IS SHOWN TO BE BUT 50°, AND FROM THAT IT NEVER VARIES. THE ATMOSPHERE IS VERY PURE. OXYGEN AND NITROGEN BEAR THE SAME RELATION TO EACH OTHER IN THE CAVE AS OUTSIDE; BUT THERE IS MUCH LESS CARBONIC ACID GAS IN THE CAVE THAN IS FOUND IN THE AIR WE BREATHE. IN THE DRYER PARTS OF THE CAVE THE PROPORTION IS ABOUT 1:500,000 AND NEAR THE RIVERS IT IS LESS STILL. NOT A TRACE OF AMMONIA HAS EVER BEEN FOUND IN THE CAVE PROPER. THE HUMIDITY OF THE ATMOSPHERE VARIES AS YOU DESCEND TO THE RIVER AND LAKE REGIONS. IN THE UPPER AVENUES AND CHAMBERS, UPON THE WALLS AND FLOORS OF WHICH NITRATE OF LIME IS DEPOSITED, THERE IS A DESTITUTION OF MOISTURE ALMOST ABSOLUTE. HERE ANIMAL MATTER MUMMIFIES INSTEAD OF DECAYING BY PUTREFACTION. A DEAD BODY LEFT IN THESE PASSAGES WOULD TURN TO A MUMMY. IN THESE SAME REGIONS, FOR THE SAME REASONS, DO NOT VERMIN. NOT A TRACE OF OZONE CAN BE DETECTED. IT IS SAID THAT THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CAVE IS THE MOST EXHALATING ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH. FRAGILE, DELICATE WOMEN HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO TRAVEL ON FOOT OVER TEN, AND EVEN TWENTY MILES OF THE ROCKY, ROUGH PASSAGES IN THE CAVE, EXPERIENCING LITTLE OR NO FATIGUE, WHEREAS THEY COULD NOT WALK ONE-THIRD THE DISTANCE IN THE OPEN AIR. THE GREAT PURITY OF THE CAVE'S ATMOSPHERE IS NOT FULLY REALIZED UNTIL THE EXPLORER EMERGES INTO THE "SWEET, PURE COUNTRY AIR" OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. THE PASSAGE FROM ONE TO THE OTHER IS LIKE TRANSITION FROM THE AIR OF THE STREETS INTO A CLOSE DORMITORY, WHERE A SCORE OF SLEEPERS HAVE SPENT THE NIGHT.

GOOD FOR CONSUMPTIVES.

This extreme purity of the atmosphere of the cave founded the impression, some fifteen years ago, that a residence there would cure, or at least check, consumption. The test was a sorrowful one. A half dozen consumptives, about 1843, entered the cave for the distance of a mile or more, where they erected huts of stone and some of wood, in which they took up their residence. During the first few days they were greatly encouraged by the effect. Then bo-

gan a reaction. Several of them soon died in the cave, and all the rest expired soon after their return to the exterior air. Let physicians explain the cause of this effect. Short trips into the cave are advantageous to people afflicted with lung troubles, inflammatory rheumatism and dysentery. The public ought to be warned, however, deleterious may be the subject of the warning, that there are certain constant periods in every lady's life when, under no circumstances, should she enter the cave. Seriously, and even death, have frequently followed this violation of nature's law, when the victim was entirely ignorant that she was defying death.

HOW DISCOVERED.

It is a matter of legend, if not of history, that Mammoth Cave was discovered by a hunter many years ago who chased a bear into the mouth. He followed and explored it for quite a distance. The Indians, however, had occupied the main cave years before. Evidence of their aboriginal habitation were discovered to a distance of a mile and a half back from the entrance—then up to the verge of the River, unless it is a sink hole which they could never cross, as it was one hundred and seventy feet deep and extends entirely across the passage. But white man's ingenuity long afterward threw a bridge across the chasm and gave access to miles upon miles of the cavern, which extends still further into the bowels of the earth, a distance of seven and a half miles.

THE CAVE BREATHE'S.

For half a year it inhales the outer air; then it holds its breath for a few days, after which it exhales for a six months' period. In other words, during summer months, when the external temperature is much warmer than is the temperature of the cave, a constant stream of air pours out of the mouth; and the hotter the weather grows the stronger grows the blast from the cave. When the external temperature is about the same as the cave's—that is, in the spring—a calm exists in the cavern's mouth and it holds its breath. Such was the condition when we visited it. But in winter, when the thermometer goes down toward zero, the cold air of the valley rushes into the cave as though pursuing an army of demons into hades. At certain seasons of the year the current of air in the passages near the mouth is such that lights are blown out. This current of air becomes neutralized, however, as one goes further in, and finally is allayed entirely by the reservoir properties of the enlarging chambers, which are to be found after a distance of half a mile.

SALTPETER.

Saltpeter was manufactured in the main cave in 1812, by Archibald Miller, of Philadelphia, who took it to the east and sold to the American government to be used in the manufacture of gunpowder. The cave is still just as rich a mine of deposit for the mineral as it was then, but nobody could now successfully compete in manufacturing it there with the markets of foreign lands. The East Indies and South America at this later day supply the trade. Potash saltpeter is largely shipped all over the world from Bombay and Calcutta. Whereas soda-saltpeter is found in unlimited supply in the Desert of Atacama, on the west coast of South America. This profitable arid desert lies partly in Bolivia, partly in Chili and partly in Peru, and it is the innocent cause of the fierce war which has just been waged among these three governments. It is hardly likely that anybody will ever go to war over the rights to Mammoth cave saltpeter beds. The petrified hoof tracks of deer and rats of cart wheels made in 1812 are still to be seen in the cave nearest the entrance. The saltpeter pit at the bored logs used as aqueducts to convey water into the cave for use in making the saltpeter, are still in existence, and owing to the purity of the atmosphere, they would be as solid and perfect today as when placed there, nearly seventy years ago.

DANTE'S INFERNO.

Neither Dante nor Jules Verne has ever been in Mammoth Cave. It is not strange, therefore, that neither, in their picture of subterranean horrors and mysteries, has pictured anything so awfully sublime, so grandly impressive, as this greatest of natural caverns' exhibition. The mind of man cannot grasp the magnificence and glory of nature's work in these caverns until his eyes have seen and his soul felt the subterranean wonders. It is not in the power of man to describe what is to be seen in these underground halls and chambers, and it will not be attempted here. We shall give some facts and data concerning the most wonderful of the thousand sights that are to be seen there.

THE GUIDES.

There are three regular guides attached to the cave and several "subs." The oldest guide is Mat, a colored man, who has lived nearly sixty years. Mat has been guide in the cave for forty-two years. His son Henry is one of the substitutes, and has been taking parties in for fifteen years. The other two regular guides are William and Nicholas, both colored. William is a ventriloquist in his way, and puts the gift of pleasing use for the benefit of his guests. The original guide, whose daring explorations revealed many of the wonders of the cave to civilization, was Stephen Bishop. His remains lie buried under the red clay of the neighboring hills. A mistaken idea prevails that the guide will collect exorbitant fees from the tourists he takes in charge. This idea should be exploded. He is paid a monthly salary by the manager of the cave, and is entitled to no fees unless the visitors freely contribute a quarter apiece, which they nearly always do, to show their certain appreciation for his efforts to please everybody. Each visitor to the cave pays two or three dollars at the hotel office for a ticket admitting him respectively to the short or long route in the cave. He joins the regular party of the route indicated, and a guide sets out with such a party at a stated hour in the day. Tourists over the short route start usually at 7 o'clock in the evening, and after exploring about eight miles of underground passages, return to the earth's surface an hour before midnight. The long-route voyager usually starts at 10 o'clock in the

time, and get back about 6 or 7 o'clock in the evening, after tramping through nearly sixteen miles of the miraculous. They take lunch with them, which the guide carries, and eat it usually in Washington hall, which is seven miles from the mouth. Each visitor carries an oil lamp. The guide carries two, and also has with him a bottle of oil, from which he refills the lamps while the party is munching lunch. In a haversack at his side he carries a supply of white light powder. This he uses from time to time to illuminate the wonders of the underground world.

OWNERSHIP.

The cave is owned by an estate which possesses 1,500 acres of the wild lands about and around the entrance. It is managed by Francis Klett, an intelligent, highly educated Austrian, who took charge of the estate a year ago, and has already shown much more into the management. The great drawback at present to the cave as a popular resort is the difficulty in getting to it. Though only eight miles from the Louisville and Nashville railroad, no branch road across the country to the cave has ever been projected. Mr. Klett says the railroad company refuse to build the branch because they want to buy the cave and are sharp enough not to add to its attractive qualities. He declares that the estate will in a few years have a railroad built across the country westward to the Ohio river, which is but twenty miles distant. Meanwhile the experience of an old-time stage ride through such a wild country will give people a thrills of an extraordinary nature. This is our grandfathers' found it half a hundred years ago.

MAKING A RAISÉ.

John Hays, Credit P. O., says that for nine months he could not raise his hand to a breakfast of a taste of this oil he was entirely cured. He is now well.

FACING DEATH.

Terrible Struggle in a Railroad Car With a Desperado.
Detroit Post, Dec. 5.

At 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon a thrilling episode occurred on the Michigan Central in Detroit. The train near Kalamazoo, and but for the courage of a woman might have ended in a terrible tragedy. When the train reached Pokagon a man, who had been apparently engaged in reading a newspaper, was seen to rise suddenly in his seat, and turning to a person seemingly his companion, shouted in loud tones, "You give me your revolver and let me go, and I will let you go!" A desperate struggle instantly ensued between the two men, and the startled and now thoroughly frightened passengers precipitately fled from the car, with the exception of a plucky little woman.

The man who uttered the exclamation was Henry W. White, alias Burton, a notorious stage-robber, bandit, and desperado, en route to the house of confinement. The individual he addressed was United States Marshal P. P. Wilcox, of Denver, Colo., who had him in custody. The exclamation was instantly followed by the prisoner bringing down upon the officer's head with terrible force a pair of handcuffs, which he had cunningly picked from his wrists with a toothpick. The officer was momentarily stunned and fell to the ground. He attempted to perform the work intended for it. A desperate struggle followed for the possession of the revolver, a six-shooter of 44-calibre, known as a bull-dog, now took place on the part of the officer. Now it was in his hands and then in that of the prisoner. The most mysterious thing about the struggle is that, although each tried to fire the revolver, it failed in each case to respond. "The hammer of the weapon while in the hands of the prisoner, or was thrust against the left temple of the officer with such force that the prints of it were plainly discernible when he arrived in Detroit. During the contest the lady, a Mrs. Smithson, from Denver City, remained in the car and labored heroically to aid the officer. She threw her arms about the desperado's neck and tried to hold his hands. She succeeded in restraining him, and tried to calm his fury. Toward the close of the struggle, the prisoner seeing he could not kill the officer nor get possession of the keys to unlock the shackles on his feet, placed the muzzle of the revolver against his heart and again it refused to respond. Finally the officer grabbed the belt and stopped the train. A brakeman, who acted as the struggle, had come into the car, but was afraid to touch the prisoner. The struggle was fortunately brought to a close by the opportune appearance of C. F. Chapin, of Denver, from the forward car, who joined forces with the officer. The two guards, whom the officer had brought with him, were in the baggage car, smoking during the struggle. Word finally reached them of the peril of their chief, and they came rushing to the rescue. The prisoner was soon reduced to subjection, and his hands pinioned behind his back. White did not hesitate to announce that he intended to kill the officer, rob the passengers, and make his escape to the north woods. He said he was virtually a dead man when once within the walls of the house of correction.

Wilcox with his prisoner arrived in Detroit 6:30 o'clock Saturday evening. The latter has been lodged in the house of correction, to which he weighs about 150 pounds, has sandy hair and mustache, and keen gray eyes. He is as lithe as a panther. He is quite well educated, and has all the requisite elements for a thief. His courage is unquestioned, and his daring unassailable. He was born in Barton county, Texas, twenty-eight years ago. His hands are red with human blood; and his few years marked with other crimes. The first man he killed was his father. During his brief career he has robbed the passengers and mails of nine stage coaches. The bulk of his depredations were committed

rule. He was sentenced during the administration of President Hayes to ten years in the Wheeling (West Va.) penitentiary for robbing a stage, but was subsequently pardoned.

About five months ago, between 8 and 9 o'clock at night, he robbed a stage-coach en route from Alamosa to Lake City. There were thirteen passengers in the coach, and White did the work unaided. He placed a pole across the road on which he suspended gunnicks. When the coach drove up he halted the driver. Possessing wonderful powers of mimicry, he personated the voices of three or four men. Behind the breastworks he had reared. The passengers were thoroughly frightened by such an imposing display of force, and permitted to White parade them on the roadside. He blind-folded them, went through their pockets, and robbed the mail bags. He then made his escape, and the passengers after he departed soon discovered the ruse that was played upon them. White was soon after captured at Pueblo, while en route to Denver city he jumped off the train and tried to get a horse that stood near by. He was recaptured and taken to his destination, tried, convicted and sentenced for life to the Larimer city penitentiary. Upon it being represented to the judge of that district that the prison at that point was an unsafe place for a man of White's character the sentence was changed to the Detroit House of Correction.

United States Marshal Wilcox informed a Post and Tribune reporter Saturday evening that he had dealt with scores of desperate men, but had never met the equal of White. He said he took every necessary precaution, to bring him in safely to this city. He had watched him closely all the way to Detroit. Before he left Denver City he put all his private business in order in case of accidents, knowing the character of the man he had to deal with. Wilcox is a powerful and determined-looking man, with keen, black eyes and of fearless appearance. Saturday evening he was suffering quite severely from the terrible struggle he had passed through, although he made no complaint. His head, face, shoulders and hips were badly bruised. The hearing of his left ear is slightly impaired. The blow which he received on the left side of his head had made him partially deaf. He is stopping at the Russell House, and leaves for Washington, D. C., Monday. He is entitled to great credit for his coolness and courage.

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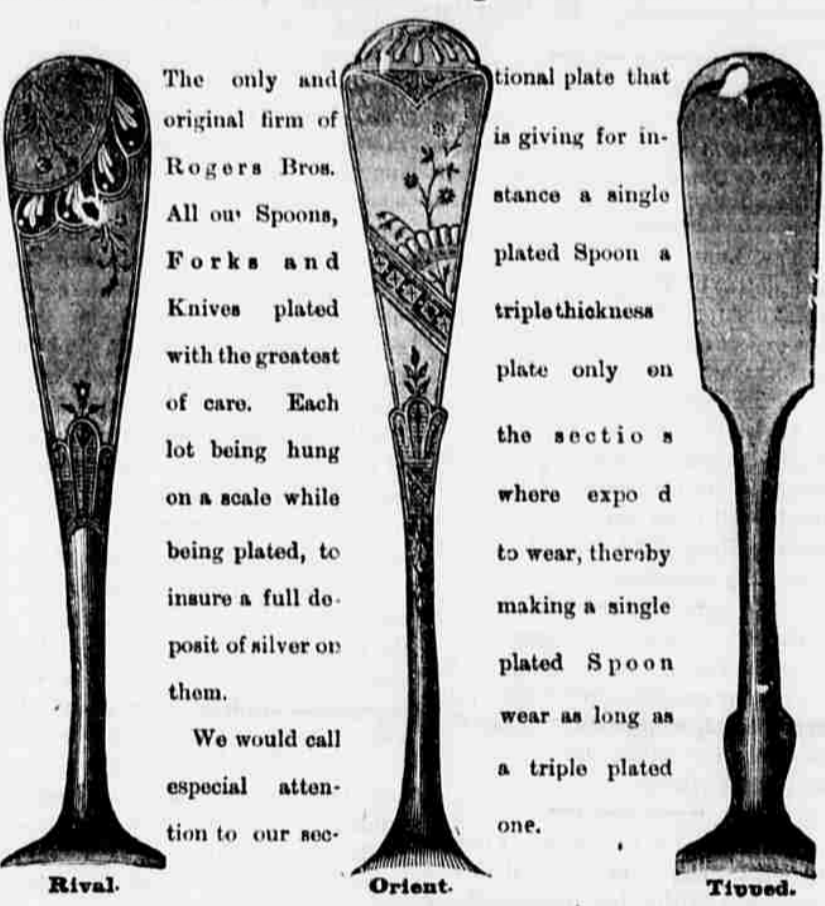
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