

THE ASHLAND TIDINGS

FRIDAY, AUGUST 2, 1878.

fullness; a mixed company of romantically inclined young people is necessary. And such were, with few exceptions, the cave hunters.

There was no hurry to seek the arms of Morpheus on the night of our arrival. The excitement of the day and expectations of the morrow were slow to be lulled to sleep; then, there were other sensations and anticipations, that, the more they are mutually lulled, the livelier they become. Cupid, though blind, is not a friend to drowsiness. And if there had been no other antidote to "Pleasant dreams and slumbers light," the antics of Tommy, the general good cheer and the good music (instrumental and vocal) to which many of the party abandoned themselves, would have been sufficient to reconcile us to a protracted deprivation of "Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

The morning of the 11th was met by our party with an early greeting; some had visions of venison before them, others found wholesome exercise looking after the riding animals, while those remaining in camp attended to culinary preparations. Breakfast over, preparations were immediately begun for the work of exploration. The most suitable toilet for this business would probably comprise a suit of stout ducking, something not cumbersome nor easily torn; and a bandage over the head instead of fashionable hats or bonnets, is recommended on the score of convenience, as well as economy.

At the mouth of the cave are two openings, both of which have been choked up with large rocks fallen from above, and by sediment, washed in by the stream of water that issues from the cave, and all who penetrate the lower cave must "stoop to conquer." A stiff breeze is to be contended with at the start, to the detriment of lighted candles, but once inside the cave a few rods, the atmosphere is quiet, whole some and of an equal temperature—such as would certainly be advantageous to persons affected with weak lungs. Three or four rods from the entrance, we come to a ragged chamber that is partly filled with huge stones, from ten to thirty feet in width, and has a fissure extending fifty or more feet overhead. Here are also side tunnels, of little interest, however, in point of ornamental embellishments. There are several small passage ways leading to the other apartments. You can either crawl on all fours, or squeeze through a narrow fissure through which runs the stream of water. It was observed that most of the younger ladies had—if anything—a partiality for those places where there was the most squeezing. Girls who inherit a constitutional aversion to all such experiences, should shun the lower cave. Along the water course is an irregular tunnel, up which a person can ascend about two hundred yards to where the stream is too much choked up for further ingress. It is then to the side and upper chambers, that you must turn for the more curious and beautiful specimens of nature's skill in the art of decoration—such fantastic corals were never dreamed of by the most skillful of human architects. Overhead are to be seen numerous pendant stalactites, resembling icicles. There is seemingly no limit or regularity to the excavations. Wherever the water chanced to run, there the work of excavation and embellishment went on. No inconvenience on account of dampness is experienced in the upper chambers. Numerous drops or beads of water glisten overhead, waiting to be crystallized into shining stalactites. There are many cavities into which the tourist can only peep without penetrating, and this circumstance will fortunately secure much of this underground splendor from spoliation. In trying to find one of the upper chambers previously visited by the writer, we wandered off in a new set of ragged apartments with numerous side openings, we did not try to investigate. Finally one or two of us entered a big recess, that, on account of its size and ugly appearance, might be mistaken for "Sodom's hole" prophesied to exist near the North Pole. Over the pile of immense rock that, from time to time, has fallen into this chasm, the writer trailed a line as a guide to return by, and when near what was supposed to be the surface of the mountain, where a strong draught was noticeable, and in plain sight of "other worlds to conquer," the string was fastened and the work of exploration suspended, only temporarily, however.

When our party retired from the cave most of our number were too much fatigued to think of resuming operations, and it looked as though further research would be abandoned. The discovery of what were supposed to be other openings to a cave higher up the mountain, however, induced Mr. H. and myself to try the experiment of an entirely new discovery. Our labors were most happily rewarded in the sudden discovery of more natural magnificence and splendor, than is usually seen by ordinary mortals in a life time. Down a very narrow opening, hardly large enough for a full-sized man to squeeze through, we descended to a passage way that led us to a string of apartments, it is perfectly useless to attempt to describe. Only by seeing them as we saw them, fresh from the

hand of Him who created all things and as the result of many centuries of growth and construction, can anyone fully realize how truly transporting the sensations born of such a discovery. Is it any wonder that we proclaimed from the mouth of the entrance, to those who were in camp below, that we had discovered the Celestial City? or, that we returned to camp that evening, with the proud consciousness of having seen "glory enough for one day?"

A number of the young men, on hearing our report, rushed up the mountain and into the newly found entrance to verify our statements. It was not a great while, however, ere they came belting forth from the scene of hidden splendors, with an enthusiasm apparently more irrepressible than our own. These events determined our stay at the cave another day, that all the party might enjoy a sight, so rare and yet so glorious. An accident, however, happened to one of the young ladies during the afternoon, that deprived her of this satisfaction. One of the young men had accidentally started a rock on the side of the mountain that rolled against her, bruising her ankle so seriously as to temporarily put a stop to active pedestrian exercise. This circumstance gave the author of the accident who had subsequently killed a large venison, to perpetrate the cruel joke, that he had killed one deer and crippled another, during the trip. Literally true, with necessary changes in orthography.

July the 12th was a busy day with the cave hunters. Such adjectives as "beautiful," "nice," "splendid," etc., had to do service so frequently that they became tiresome, if not odious, expressions. The number of times that "the prettiest room yet," was found, is not definitely remembered; nor was there sufficient unanimity of opinion to confine that distinction to well defined limitations—they were all the prettiest. After passing through a long aisle profusely resplendent in olearious crystallizations, we come to what resembles a furnished apartment or sitting room. This we named Martha's drawing room, in honor of Miss Martha Nail; further on, we descended into what, in many respects, resembles a cellar, filled with boxes, barrels and bottles of diversified shapes and sizes. This place was christened Mary's cellar, in honor of Miss Mary Layton. Still further on is Emma's closet; back a short distance, and to one side is Anabel's pantry; while to the right of Martha's drawing room is one of the most unique apartments of all—called Tommy's candy shop. This is an almost exact likeness of a well-arranged toy shop, with numerous fancy fixtures hung out as a sign to entrap the runaway urchin. An adjoining room contains a miniature lake or fountain of water. Several places were examined by members of our party that were not visited by the writer, but he has their testimony to the fact that such places were "the prettiest yet." One place was described by Rev. M. C. Miller, as resembling an ancient sarcophagus, stored with old mummies. But I dare say it never entered into the mind of man, much as has been expended by mighty rulers for costly sepulture, in devising a mansion equal to this. Here are solemn shapes and fairy frost-work artistically blended; beautiful cascades and water falls congealed in solid marble; ghost-like images, too substantial to be called an apparition; limestone stairways, with marble steps and balustrade, with ceiling, sides and floor of each room radiant with the profuse magnificence and gorgeous splendor of generous, modest, unassuming nature.

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