

mouth of Wier's Cave. This cavern derives its name from *Barnet Weir*, who discovered it in the year 1804. It is situated near Madison's Cave, so celebrated, though the latter cannot be compared with the former.

There were three of us besides our guide, with lighted torches, and our loins girded, now ready to descend into the cave. We took our torches in our left hands and entered. The mouth was so small that we could descend only by creeping, one after another. A descent of almost twenty yards brought us into the first room. The cave was exceedingly cold, dark, and silent, like the chambers of death. In this manner we proceeded, now descending thirty or forty feet—now ascending as high—now creeping on our hands and knees, and now walking in large rooms—the habitations of solitude. The mountain seems to be composed almost wholly of limestone, and by this means the cave is lined throughout with the most beautiful incrustations and stalactites of carbonated lime, which are formed by the continual dripping of the water through the roof. These stalactites are of various and elegant shapes and colors, often bearing a striking resemblance to animated nature. At one place we saw over our heads, what appeared to be a *waterfall*, of the most beautiful kind. Nor could the imagination be easily persuaded that it was not a reality; you could see the water boiling and dashing down, see its white spray and foam—but it was all solid limestone.

Thus we passed onward in this world of solitude—now stopping to admire the beauties of a stalactite—now wondering at the magnificence of a large room—now creeping through narrow passages, hardly wide enough to admit the body of a man, and now walking in superb galleries, until we came to the largest room called *Washington Hall*. This is certainly the most elegant room I ever saw. It is about two hundred and seventy feet in length, about thirty-five in width, and between thirty and forty feet high. The roof and sides are very beautifully adorned by the tinsels which Nature has bestowed in the greatest profusion, and which sparkle like the diamond, while surveyed by the light of torches. The floor is flat, and smooth, and solid. I was foremost of our little party in entering this room, and was not a little startled as I approached the centre, to see a figure, as it were, rising up before me out of the solid rock. It was not far from seven feet high, and corresponded in every respect to the common idea of a ghost. It was very white, and resembled a tall man clothed in a shroud. I went up to it sideways, though I could not really expect to meet a ghost in a place like this. On examination I found it was a very beautiful piece of the carbonate of lime, very transparent, and very much in the shape of a man. This is called *WASHINGTON'S STATUE*—as if nature would do for this hero, what his delivered country has not done—rear a statue to his memory.

Here an accident happened which might have been serious. One of our party had purposely extinguished his light lest we should not have enough to last. My companion accidentally put out his light, and in sport came and blew out mine. We were now about sixteen hundred feet from daylight, with but one feeble light, which the falling water might in a moment have extinguished. Add to this, that the person who held this light was at some distance viewing some falling water.

“Conticuerunt omnes, intentique ora tenebant”

We however once more lighted our torches; but had we not been able to do so, we might, at our leisure, have contemplated the gloominess of the cavern, for no one would have come to us till the next day. In one room we found an excellent spring of water, which boiled up as if to slake our thirst, then sunk into the mountain, and was seen no more. In another room was a noble pillar, called the *TOWER OF BABEL*. It is composed entirely of stalactites of lime, or, as the appearance would seem to suggest, of petrified water. It is about thirty feet in diameter, and a little more than ninety feet in circumference, and not far from thirty feet high. There are probably millions of stalactites in this one pillar.

Thus we wandered on in this world within a world, till we had visited twelve very beautiful rooms, and as many creeping places, and had now arrived at the end—a distance from our

entrance of between twenty-four and twenty-five hundred feet; or, what is about its equal, half a mile from the mouth. We here found ourselves exceedingly fatigued; but our torches forsook us to tarry, and we once more turned our lingering steps towards the common world. When we arrived again at *Washington Hall*, one of our company three times discharged a pistol, whose report was truly deafening; and as the sound reverberated and echoed through one room after another till it died away in distance, it seemed like the moanings of spirits. We continued our wandering steps till we arrived once more at daylight, having been nearly three hours in the cavern. We were much fatigued, covered with dirt, and in a cold sweat; yet we regretted to leave it. From the farther end of the cave I gathered some handsome stalactites, which I put into my portmanteau and preserved as mementos of that day's visit.

To compare the Natural Bridge and Cave together as objects of curiosity, is exceedingly difficult. Many consider the *Bridge* as the greatest curiosity; but I think the *Cavern* is. In looking at the *Bridge* we are filled with awe; at the cavern with delight. At the *Bridge* we have several views that are awful; at the *Cave* hundreds that are pleasing. At the *Bridge* you stand, and gaze in astonishment; at the *Cave* awfulness is lost in beauty and grandeur is dressed in a thousand captivating forms. At the *Bridge* you feel yourself to be *looking* into another world; at the *Cave* you find yourself already *arrived* there. The one presents to us a God who is very “wonderful in working;” the other exhibits the same power, but with it is blended loveliness in a thousand forms. In each is vastness. Greatness constitutes the whole of one; but the other is elegant, as well as great. Of each we must retain lively impressions; and to witness such displays of the Creator's power, must ever be considered as happy events in our lives. While viewing scenes like these, we must ever exalt the energy of creating power, and sink under the thoughts of our own insignificance. The works of nature are admirably well calculated to impress us deeply with a sense of the mighty power of God, who can separate two mountains by a channel of awfulness, or fill the bowels of a huge mountain with beauties, that man, with all the aid of art, can only admire, but never imitate.

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Washington, the Surveyor

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At the very time of the congress of Aix la Chapelle, the woods of Virginia sheltered the youthful George Washington, the son of a widow. Born by the side of the Potomac, beneath the roof of a Westmoreland farmer, almost from infancy his lot had been the lot of an orphan. No academy had welcomed him to its shades, no college crowned him with its honors: to read, to write, to cipher—these had been his degrees in knowledge. And now, at sixteen years of age, in quest of an honest maintenance, encountering incredible toil; cheered onward by being able to write to a schoolboy friend, “Dear Richard, a doubleloon is my constant gain every day, and sometimes six pistoles;” “himself his own cook, having no spit but a forked stick, no plate but a large chip;” roaming over spurs of the Alleghenies, and along the banks of the Shenandoah; alive to nature, and sometimes “spending the best of the day in admiring the trees and richness of the land;” among skin-clad savages, with their scalps and rattles, or uncouth emigrants, “that would never speak English;” rarely sleeping in a bed; holding a bear-skin a splendid couch; glad of a resting-place for the night upon a little hay, straw, or fodder, and often camping in the forests, where the place nearest the fire was a happy luxury;—this stripling surveyor in the woods, with no companion but his unlettered associates, and no implement of science but his compass and chain, contrasted strangely with the imperial magnificence of the congress of Aix la Chapelle. And yet God had selected. Not Kaunitz, nor Newcastle, nor a monarch of the house of Hapsburg, nor of Hanover, but the Virginia stripling, to give an impulse to human affairs, and, as far as events can depend on an individual, had placed the rights and the destinies of countless millions in the keeping of the widow's son. BANCROFT.