

grandeur of the cave, but our anticipations were far surpassed. The entire length of the passages is said to be over 150 miles. We did not go through all of them, but for mile after mile and hour after hour we wandered, coming at every moment to new scenes of wonder and delight. Through spacious corridors, and vaulted domes and chambers we pass, some of them of majestic size and grandeur. One of the noblest of these is The Star Chamber, shown in the large cut on our first page. It is a vast hall 70 feet wide, 60 high, and 500 long. Here, to use the words of another:

A strangely beautiful transformation scene is exhibited. The lofty ceiling is coated with black gypsum, studded with thousands of white spots, caused by the efflorescence of the sulphate of magnesia. Our guide asks us to sit down on a log bench by the wall, and then, collecting the lamps, vanishes behind a jutting rock; whence, by adroit manipulations, he throws shadows flitting like clouds athwart the starry vault. The effect is extremely fine, and the illusion is complete. One can easily persuade himself that the roof is removed, and that he looks up from a deep valley into the real heavens. Yet over a hundred feet of solid rock is above his head.

"Good-night," says the guide; "I will see you again in the morning."

With this abrupt leave-taking he plunges into a gorge, and we are in utter darkness. Even the blackest midnight in the upper world has from some quarter a few scattered rays; but here the gloom is without a gleam. In the absolute silence that ensues, we hear the beating of our hearts. But while we are roundly berating the guide's treachery, we see in the remote distance a faint glimmer, like the first streak of dawn. The light increases in volume till it tinges the tips of the rocks, like tops of hills far away. The horizon is bathed in rosy hues, and we are prepared to see the sun rise, when all at once the guide appears, swinging his cluster of lamps, and asking us how we like the performance. Loudly encored, he repeats the transformation again and again,—starlight, moonlight, thunder clouds, midnight and day dawn, heralded by cock-crowing, the barking of dogs, lowing of cattle and various other farmyard sounds; until, weary of an entertainment that long ago lost its novelty for him, he bids us resume our line of march. Another single chamber is 800 feet long, 300 feet wide and 120 feet high, and covers an area of over four acres—probably the largest room in the world.

New objects of interest met us at every step as we advanced. During a moment's pause we were startled by what seemed the loud ticking of a musical time-piece. It was but the measured melody of water dripping into a basin hidden behind the rocks. Drop by drop monotonously it falls, as it has fallen, it may be, for a thousand years.

The Giant's Coffin is near by—a rock shaped like a mighty sarcophagus. It is detached from the ceiling, walls and floor, resting its weight on stone trestles, and equals in size one of the famous blocks of Baalbek, being forty feet long, twenty wide and eight deep.

There are also deep pits, down which we gaze with awe into the impenetrable darkness. Then the guide takes from his haversack a fireball which he ignites and hurls down the abyss. Deeper and

deeper it falls, lighting up the rocky walls, till it reached the distant bottom of the pit, and, flickering to extinction, darkness and silence resume their immemorial and solitary reign. The darkness is intense and appalling—like that of Egypt, "a darkness that may be felt."

Then lofty domes expand; one of these, the Mammoth Dome, is estimated as 250 feet high. When lit up with burning magnesium or Bengal lights it is most impressive and sublime, the deep shadows croning around, the feeble glimmer of the tapers only making the darkness visible, and the brilliance of the magnesium light illuminating the stately "Egyptian columns," twenty-five feet in diameter, and supporting, age after age, the massive roof.

Great stalactites of fantastic forms hang from the roof, formed by the dripping, through countless centuries, of the lime-saturated water upon the floor, where huge stalagmites are formed. In places the stalactites and stalagmites have met and form a huge column of alabaster, supporting the roof like the piers in a Gothic cathedral. Indeed, one chamber is so named, and here religious service is frequently held, and more than once a marriage ceremony has been performed. The wall in places is studded with exquisite crystals of snowy gypsum simulating the form of every imaginable flower.

"Floral clusters, bouquets, wreaths, garlands, embellish nearly every foot of the ceilings and walls; while the very soil sparkles with trodden jewels. The pendulous fringes of the night-blooming cereus are rivalled by the snowy plumes that float from rifts and crevices, forever safe from the withering glare of daylight. Clumps of lilies, pale pansies, blanchet tulips, drooping fuchsias, sprays of asters, spikes of tuberose, wax-leaved magnolias—but why exhaust the botanical catalogue? The fancy finds every gem of the greenhouse and parterre in this crystalline conservatory."

One of the most striking adventures is the sail on Echo River, which flows in darkness well-nigh 200 feet below the surface. It is thus vividly described by an accomplished writer:

On entering River Hall, we found our path skirting the edge of cliffs 60 feet high and 100 feet long, embracing the sullen waters of what is called the Dead Sea. Descending a flight of steps, we came to a cascade, but a little farther on, said to be a re-appearance of the waterfall at the entrance, suggesting the idea that the cave has doubled on its track. Passing the River Styx and Lake Lethe, we come to Echo River. Four boats await us on the banks. Each has seats on the gunwales for twenty passengers, while the guide stands in the bow and propels the primitive craft by a long paddle, or by grasping projecting rocks. The river's width varies from twenty to two hundred feet, and its length is about three-quarters of a mile.

The low arch rises to a height varying from 10 to 30 feet, while the plummet shows a still greater depth below.

A quiet lady in black velvet led us in sacred song. The concord of sweet sounds was surprisingly agreeable; but the tones followed each other too rapidly to secure full justice. A single aerial vibration given with energy, as by a pistol-shot, rebounded from rock to rock. The din awakened by discordant sounds was frightful. On the other hand, when the voice gave the tones of

a full chord *seriatim*, they came back in a sweeping *arpeggio*. Flute-music produced charming reverberations. The finest vocal effect followed the utterance, as strongly and firmly as possible, of the keynote of that long vault, letting all other sounds meanwhile cease; the wonderful vibrations thus caused were prolonged from fifteen to thirty seconds after the original tone had been delivered.

An extraordinary result was obtained by the guide's agitating the water vigorously with his broad paddle, and then seating himself in silence by my side. The first sound that broke the stillness was like the tinkling of silver bells. Larger and heavier bells then seemed to take up the strange melody, as the waves sought out the cavities in the rock. And then it appeared as if all chimes of all cathedrals had conspired to raise a tempest of sweet sounds. They then died away to utter silence. We still sat in expectation. Lo, as if from some deep recess that had been hitherto forgotten, came a tone tender and profound; after which, like gentle memories, were re-awakened all the mellow sounds that had gone before, until River Hall rang again. This concert was prolonged for several minutes, until the agitation of the waters had wholly subsided. Those who try their own voices are pleased to have the hollow wall faithfully give back every shout and song, whimsical cry or merry peal; but the nymphs of Echo River reserve their choicest harmonies for those who are willing in silence to listen to the voice of many waters.

Another prominent writer says of the ride on Echo River: "This alone is worth a trip across the ocean. Darkness indescribable, stillness which can only be likened to the tomb, yet gliding over waters without a wave, a stream without beginning or end. 'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep,' sung in a deep, manly voice, wakes the 'echoes' and the reverberations go down the cavernous depths for miles and continue sounding in fainter and fainter tones until they seem to finally die away at an immense distance. 'William' (the guide) then sings the 'Sweet By-and-By' and more melody is heard than was voiced by the 'Swedish Nightingale' in days when whole cities hung upon her tones. If Nilsson, Kellogg, or Gerster would go there and sing, the music would surely call back to life the 'dwellers in the caves,' and bring out the rock-riveted melodies of the lost ages."

In this river my son had the good fortune to catch one of the strange eyeless crawfish which haunt its dark depths. As no ray of light ever penetrates its eternal gloom, they have no need of eyes, and in the lapse of ages these have disappeared. He also procured one of the eyeless fishes, which are so great a curiosity as to be preserved in the museums of London, Vienna, and Berlin. But space will not permit to recount our adventures in traversing the rugged route of Sparks Avenue, in scrambling through "Fat Man's Misery," and in wriggling our way up the winding "Corkscrew;" nor to describe the strange stone houses in which a number of invalids once dwelt, in the hope that the dry and equable temperature of the Cave would cure consumption; nor the queer salt vats, in which, during the war of 1812, vast quantities of saltpetre for manufacturing gunpowder were leached. We shall fully describe

these and many other striking aspects of the cave in an early number of the *Methodist Magazine*, to be illustrated with 14 elegant engravings, much finer and more beautiful than those given in this article.

Bayard Taylor, after visiting all the great natural wonders of the Old and New World, says of the Cave: "I had been twelve hours underground, but I had gained an age in a strange and hitherto unknown world; an age of wonderful experience, and an exhaustless store of sublime and lovely memories. Before taking a final leave of the Mammoth Cave, however, let me assure those who have followed me through it, that no description can do justice to its sublimity, or present a fair picture of its manifold wonders. It is the greatest natural curiosity I have ever visited, Niagara not excepted, and he whose expectations are not satisfied by its marvellous avenues, domes, and starry grottoes, must either be a fool or a demigod."

We were not so long in the cave as he—only about half the time. After travelling underground for about twelve miles, we emerged into the starry night at two o'clock, and in the comfortable beds of the hotel soon forgot all our fatigue.

Mammoth Cave is only eighty-four miles south of Louisville, on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. A visit to it can be easily combined with one to the Great Southern Exposition, which we had also the pleasure of visiting. The International Sunday-school Convention will be held next June in the city of Louisville, and doubtless many Canadian delegates will desire, when so near it, to visit this great natural curiosity. For their information we may say that round trip tickets are issued by the Louisville and Nashville Railway, entitling the tourist to, we believe, a night's lodging and one meal at the Cave Hotel for \$8.75.

#### FOR THE BOYS.

**T**HE *Wide Awake* gives the following story, which is all the better for being true:

Two men stood at the same table in a large factory in Philadelphia, working at the same trade. Having an hour for their nooning every day, each undertook to use it in accomplishing a definite purpose; each persevered for about the same number of months, and each won success at last. One of these two mechanics used his daily leisure hour in working out the invention of a machine for sawing a block of wood into almost any desired shape. When his invention was complete, he sold the patent for a fortune, changing his workman's apron for a broadcloth suit, and moving out of a tenement-house, into a brown-stone mansion. The other man—what did he do? Well, he spent an hour each day during most of the year in the very difficult undertaking of teaching a little dog to stand on his hind feet and dance a jig, while he played the tune. At last accounts he was working ten hours a day at the same trade and at his old wages, and finding fault with the fate that made his fellow-workman rich while leaving him poor. Leisure minutes may bring golden grain to mind as well as purse, if one harvests wheat instead of chaff.