

CALAVERAS CAVE.

A SERIES OF UNDERGROUND WON- DERS.

Chambers and Passages of Marvellous Beauty—Remarkable Formations—Hints to Visitors.

(Continued from San Francisco Chronicle.)

Since its discovery, about a year and a half ago, numerous articles on the marvellous cavern in Calaveras county have been published, but as half the accounts were penned before the cave had been completely explored, and the remainder expatiate far more upon the nature of the surrounding country than on the subterranean wonders, those later were left almost entirely to the more or less profound depth of the reader's imagination. It is to be hoped that the following article will induce some few lovers of nature's wonders to visit the cavern, and that the universal praise which will undoubtedly follow a more general familiarity with its mysterious depths may raise it to the rank it certainly deserves among the greatest natural curiosities of California. After a walk of about half an hour over the hill at whose foot nestles the little country town of Murphy's Camp, we reach the entrance of the cavern, which is not as may be supposed on the side of the hill, but directly at our feet. And it may be here mentioned that the whole cave tends downward in one precipitous descent. It is, so to speak, an immense staircase in which the dozen chambers simply take the place of landings on our downward journey, and are connected with each other by most dangerous passages, which were formerly exclusively impracticable save with ropes or ladders. And the chambers and passages are not hewn out of the solid rock, being simply immense clefts or spaces left beneath the titanic boulders as they fell thundering upon each other when torn from the mountain side by some frightful convulsion in the dim ages of a distant past. Descending between immense boulders by means of free almost perpendicular flights of steep stairs, comprising in all some fifty feet, we reach the first chamber—one of the largest of all. At the foot of the stairs yawns a dark cavity, through which a steep slide of yielding earth leads down into the gathered gloom. The dismal depths to which it gives entry are never visited save by a very few adventurous souls and lovers of the mysterious. From the diary of a young explorer I excerpt the following description almost word for word:

A THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

"Sliding down the earth with Mercer, the proprietor of the cave, I found myself in a great chamber, whose dimensions must have been fully 100x50 feet. At its further end we climbed over immense boulders until I reached over a very small hole in the wall, and on looking down I could see an immense cleft, stretching far down until lost to sight in darkness. Squeezing through this cleft, and sliding down the steep ledge at an angle of about thirty-five degrees, to the great detriment of my wearing apparel, I could look over the edge of the ledge where I dropped off precipitately into a vault of great size, whose limits I could not reach with my candle's dim light. This vault communicates with the first chamber in the main cave at the eastern end. I was now some sixty feet down the ledge, and gazing down the ledge below my feet, I could see what appeared to be the termination of the cleft. To make certain, I threw down several stones, and my hair rose, as on reaching what I supposed to be the limit of the ledge to which I was clinging, I continued to echo until lost to hearing in the black depths beneath me. I now retired, for the first time, that my candle was but about half an inch long and was commencing to burn my fingers, so I started to return. I had to make most of my ascent by resting my feet on any projection the steep ledge offered, and by pressing against the ceiling with my hands and shoulders, and at length, after sixty feet of this laborious climbing, reached what I supposed to be the same place whence I had made my entry; but instead of my chagrin when I discovered that the only means of exit was a narrow slit, scarcely nine inches across. Mercer and his brother-in-law broke off a few pieces of rock, thus enlarging the opening by about an inch, and at length, by dint of a prodigious amount of squeezing and straining, I was extricated in an exceedingly muddy condition. But I was repaid for my exertions—those hollow depths are so dreadfully and delightfully gloomy.

THE FIRST CHAMBER.

But let us return to the first chamber. It is about 300 feet long, 60 wide, and stretches off toward the east in darkness and gloom. The roof for many feet beyond the entrance is hung with immense pendants of gloomy moss, which suddenly give way to beautiful stalactites of the most curious forms, some of which will attract the eye at once from their extraordinary likeness to familiar objects. They vary from tiny needles, but just born to masses like one vast Triton among the minnows, which depends from the roof to the right of the fourth flight of stairs, which is about two feet in diameter by eight long. But the southern wall is especially beautiful, nearly its whole length being adorned with formations of the most diverse character, varying from thick, massive rolls, which flash as if studded with diamonds, to thin, wing-like curtains of a dull white, hanging down the walls in beautiful stillness. These last give forth the most beautiful tones struck with a rod, far deeper and clearer than the notes of a silver bell. At the head of the fifth flight stands a most singularly-shaped stalagmite. Above this is a beautiful little grotto, which, though difficult of access, will well repay a glimpse. The right side of this grotto is bounded by a great white mass, foaming out, as it were, like a fall of foaming water, from the ceiling of the chamber, and streaming down the wall of the fifth flight. From the top of the fifth flight a most singular contrast meets one's eye. To the east is seen the intermediate gloom of the first chamber, while the stairs descend to this chamber into a most beautiful grotto hung with stalactites of all imaginable forms. Descending the stairs, which are bounded to the right by an enormous boulder covered with a rich, chocolate-colored formation, we stand before a gigantic stalagmite some nine feet in height, which is shaped like a most beautiful great demijohn, handle, nozzle, and all.

ANOTHER DESCENT.

Having descended a most ill-looking and precipitous passage leading down some fifty feet into the bowels of the earth, its low entrance is overshadowed by two of the most indescribably lovely objects—the Angel's Wings. These are two immense sheets of stone about eighty feet long by three wide, of a rich creamy color, hanging in wavy folds from the stalactite-covered roof.

A HINT TO VISITORS.

It may be mentioned that the guide does not always conduct visitors on this way, as the passage is a rough one. Ascending along several flights of stairs through crystals covered with the most varied formations, we enter a very large chamber most unfortunately named the Bar-room, from a fact perfectly obvious

peculiarity to be observed in all other formations of the same character.

The wings, as before mentioned, are of a creamy color, and on holding a light behind the beautiful translucent sheets, we see them to be tinged with red. Passing under the lovely object just described, please to take a last view—a view which will never be forgotten. Hence down a most precipitous flight of steps, we enter the second chamber, about five feet high, at whose bottom the only footing beside the boarded way over which we pass is a tumulus of massive boulders, thrown about in the utmost confusion. To the left of the stairs is an immense fall, much larger than that before mentioned, whose adamantine waters stream down into eight or nine separate rolls of stone, called the organ-pipes, on which nearly a whole chord may be struck in notes of silver melody. The walls of the Organ Loft are covered with the most fantastically-shaped coral-like formations, which are surprisingly beautiful. In the wall to the right of the ninth flight of stairs is a tiny little grotto about a foot in diameter, whose bottom is covered with what seems to be much of the same snakes writhing about in sinuous folds.

THE DEVIL'S CANYON.

Descending from the Organ Loft by a flight of nearly perpendicular stairs leading through a dangerous tunnel, the sides of which are covered with beautiful formations—some convoluted like immense shells and others hanging down in thick, tapestry-like curtains—we enter another chamber—if chamber it may be called—whose floor, walls, and roof are formed simply of gigantic boulders, hurled about above and beneath us in most dreadful disorder. Here we pause to gaze up the Devil's Canyon, a wild-looking gorge filled with immense boulders, which stretches far up above us, and through whose dark depths we are startled to catch a gleam of light; for on our descent from the preceding vault one of the guides has slipped aside and lighted up an immense chamber across which the canon makes its way. This chamber we will visit on our upward journey. Those mysterious forces which pass countless dark ages in perfecting their delicate work amid the gloom of the lower realms have put forth all their marvellous powers in beautifying the wall to the left of the pathway with ethereally delicate formations. The Flower-Garden, as it is called, extends down the side of the passage nearly 100 feet, and is filled with blossoms far more delicate than any to be found in the whole range of the vegetable kingdom. One may form some idea of their delicate beauty if he imagine each and every stem of water which has been undergoing these protean changes for an unknown period to have been suddenly transformed into a snow crystal, and that these crystals, in their expansion, had been forced out of the rock into lovely blossoms, each covered with spines so delicate that they break at a touch. Although many of the blossoms are partly tinged with rich dark brown, their inner depths gleam as purely white as driven snow.

CURIOUS FORMATIONS.

It is extremely to be desired that some naturalist should examine these formations and make known their elements, which he could most probably do at a glance from the form of their crystallizations.

It may seem trivial to devote as much space to these formations as to the seemingly more curious phenomena of the cavern, of which most striking are yet to be visited; but a single glance at the garden will serve as a plenary dispensation for these few almost trifling remarks. As a member of the Assembly, Mr. Benedict was elected to the position, being chairman of the Railroad Committee, and he was pushed as

THE OLD WORLD.

THE RUSSIAN ALPHABET—EXAMINATIONS AND UNPLEASANT INCIDENTS.

Americans Welcome in the Land of the Czars—Honest Examination of Effects.

(St. Petersburg correspondence of the Journal of Commerce.)

The Russian alphabet is the alphabet of three-six letters for all it is worth. Having plenty of letters they string these out into long words. How our German friends, with their addition to polysyllables, would enjoy such alphabetic resources! What tremendous word-breakers they would manufacture! Our first acquaintance with the beauties of the Russian language was made from the window of a sleeping car, a daybreak. We were two Russian territory far along without stopping we train jugged along with the Russian names of stations. At first, perhaps, there would be four or five regular English letters mixed up anyhow. Next would occur an unmistakable figure 3. This would possibly be followed by an N or an R or an L turned upside down or otherwise distorted. And in the midst of these capricious letters there would be a sprinkling of "longer cases." The "short cases" of the most exasperating description. I can imagine no mental exercise more debilitating than that of trying to spell out Russian signs with the misleading help of the English letters on them. Even if all the rest were smooth sailing there are fatal snags in the shape of gridirons, double saw-horses and other symbols of unknown import.

On the tongue of a police Russian this language is musical and fluent. We heard it accents first at Wisballein, where the baggage inspection takes place. It is no joke for fifteen hours who have been travelling for persons from Berlin to be waked at midnight and put through a custom-house ordeal. As I stepped off the train into the cold and damp of the Wisballein station a pleasant voice saluted my ear with a long sentence, of which I caught only the word "passport." Looking up, I saw, by the dim light of a lantern, a Russian officer of gigantic stature. He was most becomingly dressed in a blue tunic, flowing trousers tucked into highly-polished boots, an Astrakhan cap for his head with a red top and a white pom-pom; and a long sword trailed from his side to the floor. His large healthy face beamed benevolence. If he had asked for my pocket-book I believe I should have given it up to him without hesitation. I handed him Mr. Bayard's valued certificate of my citizenship, and he returned the Russian one. You should have seen the smile on his face stretch into a positive laugh of welcome. He bowed profoundly and mentioned me to enter a spacious room which had been depicted to me as a torture-chamber.

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THE NEW PUBLIC PRINTER.

Thomas H. Benedict, of New York.

Mr. Benedict was born at Warwick, Orange county, New York, in 1830. He was a son of William L. Benedict, who served in the Legislature of 1840, and a grandson of Senator James Bart, who was for a longer time State senator than probably any other man who ever entered the upper chamber at Albany.

Mr. Benedict was educated at the Warwick Academy. He early engaged in teaching. Subsequently he followed the railroad business and book-keeping.

In 1870 he established the Ellenville Free Press, and in 1873 purchased the Banner of Liberty. He conducted both papers as organs of Democratic opinion.

In 1873 Mr. Benedict was elected to the Assembly at Albany. He was re-elected in 1876-'77-'78, each year by increased majorities. He was a member of the Assembly, being chairman of the Railroad Committee, and he was pushed as

a candidate for Speaker in 1883. He was defeated by Alfred C. Chapin, who afterward selected him as deputy comptroller, which position he has filled for the past three years. While a member of the Assembly, Mr. Benedict established a strong reputation for ability, industry and fidelity to public trusts, and won the confidence of leading Democrats throughout the State. He became personally intimate with Grover Cleveland, Daniel Manning, and other heads of his party, and was regarded as one of the rising young Democrats of the State. He presided over the Democratic State Convention in 1883.

Mr. Benedict enjoys an unqualified reputation for integrity, and has always been a strong advocate of political reform. He is a hearty sympathizer with President Cleveland's methods of conducting the Government on "business principles." To his friends he is known as a man of great energy and executive ability. He was the personal choice of President Cleveland for the office of Public Printer.

Quantity of French Candy.

Flossie had been presented with a box of French candy.

"Now, Flossie," said her mother, "you have eaten all that you ought to. You can have one piece more, and then we will put the box away until to-morrow."

"Can I have any more like, I asked Flossie.

"Yes; take the kind you like best."

Flossie hesitated. "Well, mamma, I don't like best, can I have two pieces?"

Mr. W. Howard Perkins, of Petersburg, adjacent professor of Modern Languages at the University of Virginia, has sailed from Paris his destination of the chair of Greek at Hampden-Sydney, recently tendered him.

Medical testimony.

160 WEST FORTY-NINTH STREET, NEW YORK, June 6, 1883.

Having in the course of a large practice extensively used Alcock's Porous Plasters in the various diseases and conditions of the lungs and pleura, and in all cases of influenza, I have found them always with success, I recommend their use in that most exasperating disease, St. Peter's Cough, or Hay-Fever. Strips of plaster applied over the throat and chest will afford great relief from the choking, tickling in the throat, wheezing, shortness of breath, and pains in the chest.

R. McCOMICK, M. D.

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