



A LITTLE OLD BACHELOR.

BRIGHAM, THE CAVE-DOG.

BY H. C. HOVEY.

MANY a dog will bravely go through tangled forests, swollen streams, and mountain ravines; but when it comes to following his master down into a dark and silent cave—that is another matter! Never, until recently, have I known one that did not plainly regard it as a very solemn performance.

Jack, the old house-dog, the volunteer escort of visitors to Mammoth Cave, is no exception to this rule. He watches the negro guides trim the lamps and bunch them on canes ready for distribution. When the bell rings, he leads the company among the tall trees to the mouth of the cavern. On he goes, under the bright cascade, and beneath the black ledges, as far as the Iron Gate. He peers a moment between the bars, as if overcome by his awe of the unknown. Then, when the gate is unlocked and all have gone in, his duty is done, and he trots home again, absolutely refusing to go beyond the last glimpse of daylight!

But Jack has a companion in his old age, a common yellow cur, the hero of this true story, William—a wag, as well as a first-rate guide—explained to me the odd name given to the new dog: “We call him *Brigham*—’cause he’s *young*, you know!”

This creature is remarkable for but one thing, and that is his fondness for life below ground. He seems at home among the elves and gnomes, and appears to have no fear of darkness. The two dogs trot, side by side, as far as the Iron Gate. But there they part. Jack, as usual, returns to the hotel; but Brigham advances, pushing ahead of the guides, choosing his own path, digressing now and then, yet always returning in safety to the light of the lamps.

Brigham and I became fast friends, during my fortnight’s stay at Mammoth Cave, last summer. The gentle dignity with which he sought to aid my

under-ground researches was very amusing. How sedately he examined each of the huge saltpeter vats, three in the Rotunda and eight in the Amphi-

while the guide told the melancholy story of the Consumptive's Cottage. This is a stone building, nearly a mile within the cave, and is one of fifteen huts in which several invalids, tempted by the great purity of the cave atmosphere, and the uniformity of temperature (just fifty-four degrees, Fahrenheit, at all seasons), sought to regain their health—alas! in vain. They every one died, like the shrubs they planted about their abodes.

I suppose Brigham did not understand all this; but probably he was affected by the deserted and desolate appearance of the place, or by the lugubrious tones of the guide.

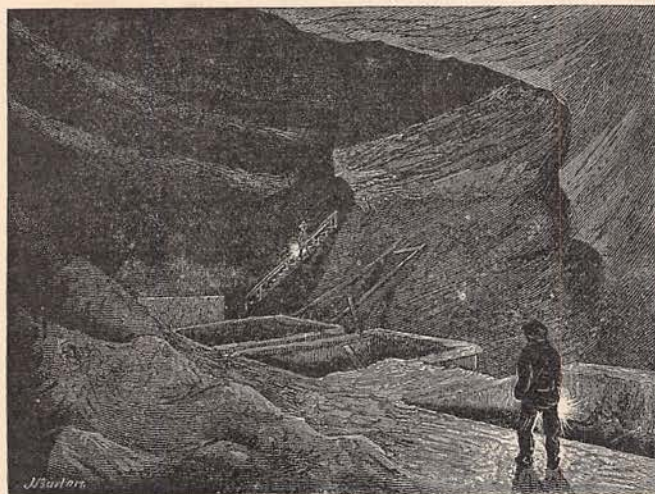
Brigham was a great favorite with the manager of the cave, who particularly warned us not to lose him; for it was feared the dog would be unable to find his way out again. Other curs that had been left behind invariably staid in the place where they had become lost, not daring

to stir, but yelping and howling till help came. The dreaded accident happened at last. We went one day on what is called the Long Route, to the end of the cave, said to be nine miles from the entrance; and Brigham went with us. We left the main cave at the Giant's Coffin, by an arched way, leading among some pits, the most famous

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THE SALTPETER VATS.



BOATING ALONG "ECHO RIVER." [SEE NEXT PAGE.]

the uncouth rocks, the mysterious Star-chamber—commanded the dog's attention as well as our own.

Usually a silent observer, he howled piteously

of which has long been known as the Bottomless Pit. My guide, however, measured it, and found that it was exactly one hundred and five feet deep.

There are six pits in all at this place, two of them lately discovered. We named them Scylla and Charybdis—because, in trying to keep out of one, you are in danger of falling into the other. These



"THE CORKSCREW." [SEE PAGE 430.]

we measured, finding them to be more than two hundred feet deep.

Brigham did not like the pits very well. It was only by much coaxing that we led him across the narrow bridge thrown over the Bottomless Pit. But, indeed, we all were glad to get away from that dangerous place.

Our path next led us down still farther, among great rocks, into such a crooked labyrinth that I think it will puzzle some of my readers to trace it on the map, although this is correctly drawn.

We went through the "Fat Man's Misery," and entered River Hall, where there are several deep lakes. Presently we came to Echo River, about thirty feet deep, from twenty to two hundred feet wide, and three-fourths of a mile long. Getting into a small boat, we paddled our way over the clear, cold water, waking the echoes from the steep, rocky walls, Brigham helping with some lively barking. Presently, we landed on a nice sandy beach at the farther end. Thence we went on, by widening avenues not marked on the map, to the terminus of the Long Route; and then we started back again.

Poor Brigham became very tired, and cared less for the lovely arches of flower-like crystals than for some cozy nook where he might curl down for a nap. At length, after taking lunch with us in Washington Hall, he started in chase of a cave-rat, and probably availed himself of the chance to take his siesta. At all events, he disappeared, and made no answer to our calls.

"Perhaps he has gone ahead to Echo River," said I, "and is waiting for us there."

"Like enough," said William, the guide. "I had n't thought of that."

But no bounding form nor joyful bark welcomed our approach. The echoes answered our calls, until it seemed as if a thousand voices were crying, "Brigham, Brigham!" in every conceivable tone, from the softest whisper to the deepest bass; and our whistling was, in like manner, repeated, until it seemed as if all the spirits of the cave had been let loose for an Æolian concert.

Plainly, the dog was lost. William thought Brigham might track us as far as the river; but that on reaching the water he surely would lose the scent, and would not try to swim across. Lighting a freshly filled lamp, William set it on a ledge, so that in case the dog should come thus far he might not feel too lonely.

Sadly we returned to the hotel, where our announcement of the loss caused a sensation; the ladies especially declaring it "perfectly dreadful to leave the poor thing alone in that horrible cave all night,"—as if it were darker there at midnight than at noon!

Early the next morning, a party of explorers crossed Echo River, and were met by Brigham. The guide reasoned with him, as one might reason with a runaway child, and tenderly took him in his arms aboard the boat.

Alas, the warnings were wasted! For, almost as soon as we had landed, that capricious cave-dog

disappeared again; and, as before, refused to obey our loudest summons. Compassion was now mixed with indignation, and we left him to his fate.

Nothing was seen of him all that day; and this

the bars; and there the dogs stood, wagging their tails, and apparently exchanging the news!

Our curiosity led us to examine Brigham's tracks, to see by what route he had found his way back.

Beginning at the Echo River, we had no difficulty in seeing that he had, step by step, followed our trail; his only guide, of course, being the sense of smell. Here, his tracks were deeply printed in soft mud, and there, more sharply defined on the mellow banks of nitrous earth, less distinctly along ridges of sand, or over heaps of stone, or up steep stair-ways.

Thus Brigham had followed us, through darkness deeper than that of midnight, along the narrow beach of Lake Lethe,



A DINNER-PARTY IN "WASHINGTON HALL."

time, of deliberate choice, he remained a second night underground.

And now comes, perhaps, the strangest part of my story. On the following morning, Jack, too, was

across the treacherous natural bridge spanning the River Styx, up to the galleries overhanging the Dead Sea, through the wild confusion of Bandit's Hall, and by many a spot where one misstep



A WEDDING IN THE "GOTHIC CHAPEL." [SEE PAGE 431.]

missing. The guides had to dispense with their customary canine escort. On arriving, however, at the Iron Gate, three hundred yards within the cave, they found Jack just outside, and Brigham behind

would have sent the poor, lonely creature plunging downward in darkness to inevitable death.

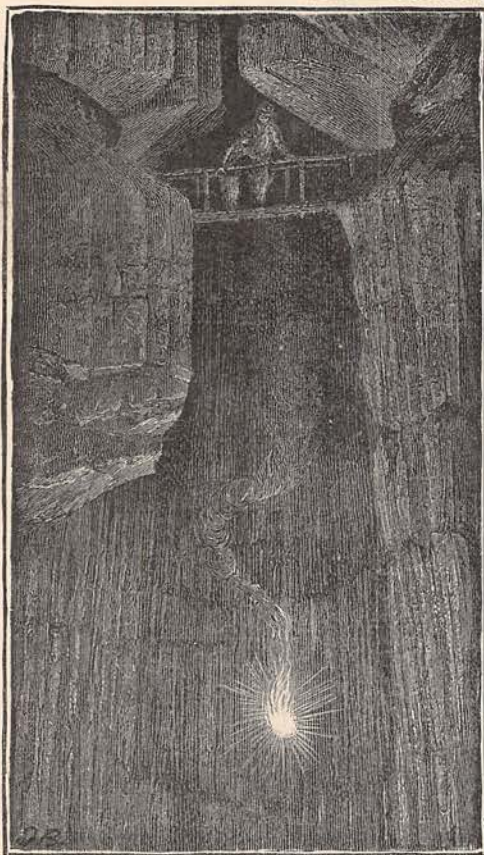
It will be remembered that we had gone *in* past the Giant's Coffin, by the arched way among the

deep pits, and through the mazes leading to River Hall. But we had come *out* by a newly discovered mode of exit, through an intricate set of fissures, known, on account of its winding nature, as "The Corkscrew." We preferred this, because it saved a mile and a half of travel. Our four-footed friend, pursuing the freshest scent, went, of course, up the Corkscrew. The opening is too irregular to be called a pit, or shaft. Yet it winds upward for a distance, vertically, of about one hundred and fifty feet; but fully five hundred feet, as one climbs, creeping through crevices, twisting through "auger-holes," and scaling precipitous rocks scattered in the wildest confusion imaginable. Three ladders have to be mounted in threading this passage. One emerges, at last, on the edge of a cliff

smoothly along to the Iron Gate, a quarter of a mile distant.

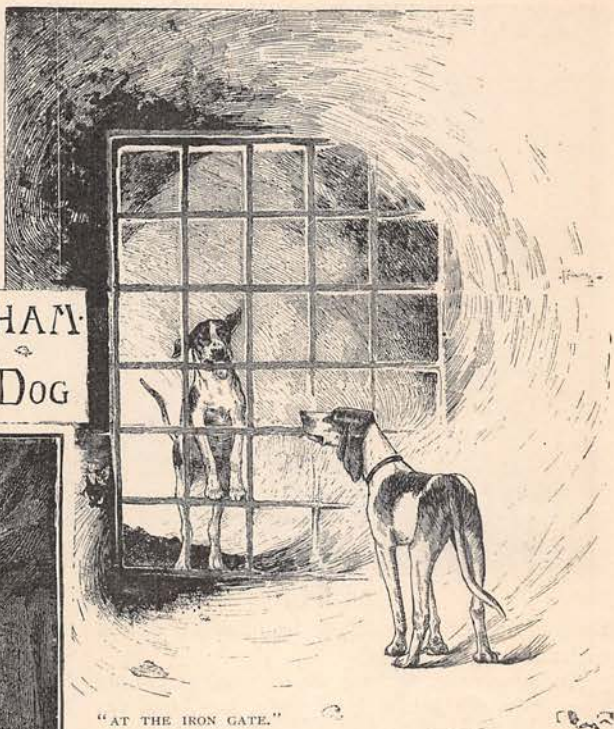
Only think of it! Through all this intricate and hazardous pass, where, without a guide, we should

BRIGHAM THE CAVE DOG



"THE BOTTOMLESS PIT." [SEE PAGE 427.]

overlooking the main cave, and down which he clammers to the level floor, where the road runs



"AT THE IRON GATE."

have found it difficult to make our way, even with lamps and a map of the cave, that yellow dog had safely gone alone! He offered no explanation of his proceedings, nor told us what motive prompted his independent explorations. But that was his affair, not ours. We honored him as a hero, and obtained for him, from the manager, Mr. Francis Klett, the "freedom of the cave for the rest of his life.

The fact should be mentioned, by contrast with this perfect and fearless operation of instinct, that expert cave-hunters find themselves nearly helpless, if left alone far within the cave and destitute of a light. The rule for any one so unfortunately situated is for him to stay where he is, as contentedly as he can, until assistance comes, which is sure to be within a few hours.

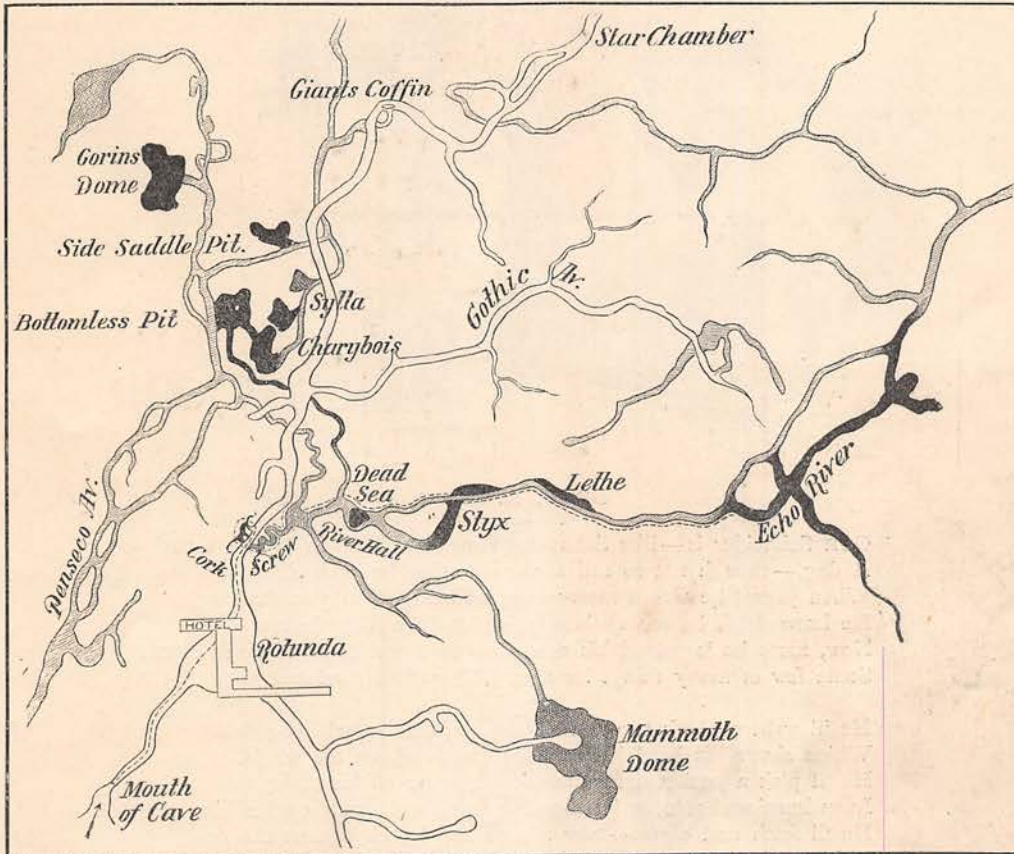
Several tales are told of persons whose reason has been lost under such circumstances; and, although I know of no instance in which life itself has been sacrificed, it can readily be seen that it might be imperiled. The stories one occasionally

reads of novices finding their way out unaided by lights, are to be discredited. An exploit of that nature would tax the resources of the most expert guide. The cases are extremely rare in which it has been done, even by the guides themselves.

One of the most thrilling stories I ever heard was told to me by "Old Matt," a colored man, who has

ter part of valor," and accordingly he hid in a crevice, put his lamp out, and quietly waited for the revelers to pass by. On coming forth from his hiding-place he found that he had no matches, and therefore could not relight his lamp.

The hour was late, and the next day was Sunday. He feared lest a long time might elapse be-



PART OF MAMMOTH CAVE. (BY PERMISSION OF THE OWNER.) THE DOTTED LINE SHOWS BRIGHAM'S RETURN PATH.

served as guide for more than forty years, and who is supposed to know every nook and corner of the explored parts of Mammoth Cave.

There had been a marriage in the Gothic Chapel, a grand, rocky chamber far within the cave. A maiden, who had promised her mother "never to marry any man on the face of the earth," had kept the letter of her pledge, and yet, in this underground spot, had wedded the man of her choice.

After the wedding there was wine, and then some of the young men took a ramble through the cave. Old Matt was at work in the vicinity of the great pits, when he heard them coming with song and with shout. Those were Ku-Klux times, and the ex-slave thought that "discretion was the bet-

fore help should come, and therefore determined to make his way out in the dark. Feeling cautiously along with his staff, he went safely until it suddenly dropped into a pit of unknown depth. Brave as Matt is known to be, he fell in a swoon, and lay, no one knows how long, on the very edge of that horrible chasm. On coming to, he collected his wits as well as he could, and felt with his hands for the path. He presently found it and proceeded on his perilous journey, making his way finally to the surface.

Old Matt told me this story himself, as he and Brigham and I sat side by side on the brink of the abyss where the faithful guide so narrowly escaped finding a tomb. And, as I listened, I was glad that the lamps were burning brightly.