Chapter 12

Travelling on Land, the Mammoth Cave, New Friends in the Middle-West (1835)

At Nashville, Martineau duly visited the men's wards of the state prison, then asked the warden to show her the women. He smiled and said they had "no ladies" at present (the American penchant for using "ladies" or "females" instead of "women" amused her). During a brief stay in the city, they were "extremely" well treated by the "landlady," who "kissed the ladies of the party all round" when they left. Indeed, Martineau's visit led to a glowing newspaper report that trusted her to give "a faithful portrait" of Americans, "without fear or favor," that was picked up by various provincial newspapers.¹

From Nashville the party set out overland on "a most interesting and exciting journey of nearly two nights and a day" to visit the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. Arriving "on a bright May morning [at] half-past seven" they went to Bell's hotel, "twelve miles from the cave." To conserve stamina for walking the reported sixty miles of passages inside the cave, the party resolved to devote "the half of two days to the object." After sleeping past noon, they were driven to the cave entrance in a "stage and four" by two sons of the hotel owner. In high excitement, Martineau noted the green turf and a rustic house and well -- her sensory impressions seemingly sharpened by the aura of mystery and danger in the adventure. At the mouth of the cave, she was struck by the romantic notion of solitude -- echoing her Repository pieces in summer 1830 -- but she marveled at the hummingbirds flitting around the icy blast from within. Descending a steep path, the party "wound down to the yawning, shadowy cave, with its diamond drips and clustering creepers." The ladies now tied handkerchiefs over their heads (like the witches in Macbeth) and tucked up their gowns for "the scramble over the loose limestone." Martineau found her hearing more acute in the gloom -- she could hear the echo of footsteps and "the hollow sound" of voices. Other sounds like the drip of moving water and sights like "the startling effect of lights seen unexpectedly in a recess, crevice, or high overhead" stirred her imagination. Walking along, their young guides entertained them with tales and bragged that every lord and celebrity of England had been to the cave. When they finally emerged, the stars were "shining resplendently." Later awakened by a cool breeze, Martineau saw stars shining through chinks in her bedroom wall (she was to learn that her windowpane had been broken when a young deer leapt through it).

On their second day in the cave, the travelers crawled through an opening of a foot and a half to enter the "Grotto." It was "a sensation worth knowing", Martineau declared in *Society*, "to feel oneself imprisoned in the very heart of a mountain," for never was there "a more magnificent prison or sepulchre." In the "Deserted Chamber," she was startled by an "apparition of two yellow stars" like nightmare visitations of her childhood. With the "gush" of exquisite sunlight afterwards, she later decreed the tour to have been "perhaps the most remarkable walk" of her life.²

Martineau and Louisa now separated from the Lorings to spend three weeks near Ashland, Henry Clay's estate near Lexington (Kentucky), the Lexington Intelligencer announcing Martineau's arrival in the city "on Monday last." Clay's wife was ill, so the travelers stayed with his daughter Anne and her husband James Erwin at Woodlands, adjoining Clay's estate. To give

his guests a full taste of Kentucky life, Erwin took them into the countryside on horseback through glades that reminded Martineau of scenes from *Ivanhoe*. Having a lesson in "rifleshooting" she also observed a herd of buffalo. While watching the felling of a huge bee tree, she looked into the cleft for honey and was promptly stung! In the evenings on the grass they watched fireflies and summer lightning. At Erwin's table they enjoyed delicacies like claret, champagne, strawberries and ice cream.

While Martineau was with the Erwins, the English traveler Charles Augustus Murray joined the party. In Travels in North America, Murray was to praise Martineau's conversation, her quickness of observation and comparison and her writing style -- but he differed from her on slavery (Martineau failed to record a joint excursion to the farm of the mule and cattle breeder, General Shelby).³ Clay came over every day, or the two ladies went to see him. Martineau was to term Clay a 'personal friend" and to give a succinct account of his career in Retrospect. As a member of the commission to negotiate the treaty of Ghent after the War of 1812, Clay had "repaired to London with his colleagues Messrs. Adams and Gallatin," and he knew a number of Martineau's English friends. Eagerly exchanging stories, they would look up "surprised to find [them]selves, not at a London dinner-table, but in the wild woods of the West." Clay, Martineau noted, had not kept up with "British life and politics so accurately as some of his brother-statesmen." He was fond of quoting men like Castlereagh, Canning, Mackintosh and Sydney Smith (all but the last before her time). Finally, she lamented Clay's protectionism, most of all the act "by which he secured the continuance of slavery in Missouri." Clay was a worthy but disappointed man who now belonged "to the losing party," she concluded. Except for asserting that while she stayed in Kentucky, "Mr. Clay was daily endeavouring . . . to impress me in favour of slavery," she virtually ignored him in her autobiography.4

At Lexington, the antislavery Bostonian James Freeman Clarke called on Martineau. He had come to the area to preach, to find subscribers for his magazine, the *Western Messenger*, and to see *her*. As a Unitarian minister, Clarke felt lonely in the "bigoted city" of Louisville. He wept over *Demerara*, he told Martineau, and valued her sympathy, for she had strongly influenced his mind. Like Ezra Gannett, Elizabeth Peabody and (for a time) Margaret Fuller, Clarke seemed emotionally overwhelmed by Martineau. They talked for "about four hours," and he dined with her at the Erwins'.

(Clarke was to reveal surprising scraps of information: Fanny Kemble had come to the Furnesses' every day while Martineau was there; Furness was a great admirer of Carlyle and had converted Martineau who was now "preparing the people for Carlyleism, for they must be fed and clothed before they can be spiritualized.")

The following week Martineau wrote to Clarke to say he was better off not to be in Boston, where she had heard that concern for "reputation" could be favored over "character." If she were a man and uncertain of her mission, she would betake herself to a kind of "Baptist mission" in the west to spread the gospel of "Love." 5

From Boston, word now arrived that was destined to alter dramatically Martineau's reputation in the south. Ellis Gray Loring reminded her she had a responsibility to study slavery without blinders, and he invited the travelers to be his guests at 671 Washington Street. "The author of 'Demerara' is a formidable personage in the Southern States," he asserted, who should observe slavery "among the *field slaves* of Carolina," in the back settlements of Alabama

and Mississippi and in the slave-markets of New Orleans. Then she would be in a position to see examples of the way slaves were treated that a member of William Lloyd Garrison's New England Anti-Slavery Society dares not attempt.

Martineau had attempted to do this, she felt. Yet having agreed to stay in Boston with Dr. Tuckerman and the Charles Lorings she accepted Ellis Loring's invitation. Though "freely shown the notoriously bad plantations" as well as "every variety" of slaves, she had greater compassion for those who had the burden of slavery thrust upon them, she said. Moreover, she regretted the persecution by abolitionists, who were a "hindrance to [slave owners'] freeing themselves from their intolerable burden." Martineau's statements roused Maria Weston Chapman, wealthy Boston matron and member of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society. Chapman returned "a long and large letter . . . the wording wonderfully terse, the style wonderfully eloquent," Martineau was to declare, in which she defended the abolitionists and warned Martineau of "the danger of the Colonisation snare." Chapman's breezy Americanisms evidently did not bother Martineau, and their meeting the following November helped to launch a new chapter in Martineau's life.⁶

Carrying letters of introduction from Clay to friends in Cincinnati, on 15 June Martineau and Louisa left Lexington and headed northeast to Maysville on the Ohio River. Then taking passage on "the first boat going to the great City of the West" proved a *mistake*. Although the captain summoned passengers on board at nine, he did not set off until past noon waiting for his mother (going to care for her other son, who had cholera) to come in from the country. Martineau thought Americans generally acted "in the noblest spirit of charity, courage, and wisdom" to help the afflicted, but the mother's public "exclamations and sensibilities" offended her.

Meanwhile the scenery along the shores of the Ohio, the "sunny and shadowy hills . . . rich bottoms . . . little settlements [and] shady creeks," seemed delightful. After the captain and his mother got off at New Richmond, the vessel made better time but did not reach Cincinnati before dark. Martineau rarely complained about American food, but she noted the "remarkably disagreeable" dinner of "tough beef, skinny chickens, grey-looking potatoes, gigantic radishes, sour bread, and muddy water in dirty tumblers." As a contrast, the first sight of Cincinnati at night was spectacular: its "long rows of yellow lights" spread along the river and up into the rolling hills, "with a furnace flaring and smoking here and there." Next morning, 16 June, Martineau and Louisa awoke at the "Broadway Hotel and Boarding-house" sited on a "wide, well-built street, with broad foot-pavements, and handsome houses." Though the usually "zealous" manager had mistakenly taken a "dangerous dose of laudanum" and tables were messy, Martineau was happy to see a black woman eating with them. Next looking out the parlor window, she was amazed to see a large house being moved up the street by means of levers and pulleys -- until a stream of callers diverted her attention and she could not watch.

(Trollope commented on the habit of moving houses around the city when she arrived in 1828. To help support her family, she had come to America with her two young daughters and opened a "bazaar" selling luxury items. The bazaar failed, and Trollope tried to recoup the loss by penning the often derogatory account of America that launched her as a writer.

Martineau's praise of Cincinnati in *Retrospect* may partly have been aimed at Trollope, though Dickens called Cincinnati "beautiful . . . cheerful, thriving, and animated," with clean, red and white houses, well-paved roads, "footways of bright tile," broad and airy streets and

good shops.)

Local people knew of Martineau from newspaper accounts, starting with a short biography in the *Cincinnati Mirror and Western Gazette of Literature and Science* (the journal's title no doubt indicating high ambitions) on 18 January 1834. No fewer than four local newspapers then reported her travels and announced her arrival in Cincinnati. Martineau returned the favor by devoting almost a chapter in *Retrospect* to the first three days of her tenday stay. An early caller was Catherine Esther Beecher, eldest daughter of Rev. Lyman Beecher "eminent for learning and talent, and for her zeal in the cause of education." When Rev. Beecher had come to Cincinnati from Connecticut in 1832 to head the Presbyterian Lane Theological Seminary, Catherine opened The Western Female Institute modeled on her former school in Hartford that offered an advanced curriculum for girls. (Conservative members of the first Presbyterian church in Cincinnati accused Rev. Beecher of heresy, and his students were expelled for discussing slavery.)

Another of Martineau's callers was Dr. Daniel Drake, "the first physician in the place," an English businessman who brought her books and tickets for a concert to be held in Trollope's bazaar -- the first concert held in Cincinnati. Drake knew of Greenhow's book on cholera, and he invited the travelers for a tour outside the city in his carriage. Martineau was amused by a "slight degree of western inflation" in his conversation and was to quote a lengthy speech he delivered in Kentucky on the future greatness of the Mississippi Valley peoples. He had come to Ohio forty-seven years earlier and plied Martineau with facts: Cincinnati had 35,000 inhabitants and exported "6,000,000 dollars' worth a year of produce and manufactures;" in 1835 ten or twelve schools, a new church, two banking houses and a hundred and fifty private homes were built. During their drive, the ladies "ran up a knoll" to admire the view, passed slaughterhouses on Deer Creek where thousands of hogs a year were efficiently slaughtered and "pickled," and finally they had tea on the grass in Drake's garden, with fireflies "flitting about." Later on the road, they met Beecher with his daughters "returning from their school in the city." Martineau was to recall a young woman "in white frock and black silk apron" who she thought must have been Beecher's talented fourteen-year-old daughter, Harriet Elizabeth, then teaching in her sister's school and writing sketches for the Western Monthly Magazine.

Next day, Martineau and Louisa saw a fledging museum of oddly assorted objects. They also visited Alexander Flash's bookstore where copies of *Illustrations of Political Economy* (but not of *Demerara*) had been advertised. Flash's declaration "in favour of the protection of foreign literary property" met with Martineau's approval.⁷

Another visit was to the "painting room" of Henry Beard to admire his portraits of children. Next they crossed the river on a ferry to appreciate the large "platform" on which the city was built. In the evening, a party of mixed guests included former Easterners who sniffed at the native Westerners. On their third day, 19 June, the ladies were taken to a celebration of the opening of the Cincinnati public school system. Martineau noticed several boys in the procession walking barefoot and thought the "specimens of elocution . . . highly amusing." Yet she wondered how many of them would "speak in Congress hereafter." That evening all of Cincinnati poured into Trollope's bazaar ("the great deformity of the city" Martineau termed it) to hear a variety of musical performers ranging from an old man in grey homespun playing the violin to a young girl in a white dress demonstrating her "love of warbling."

During a drive "about the environs" the following week they made an excursion to the

mouth of the Little Miami River (seven miles east along the banks of the Ohio), where Martineau "ran up the ascent" for the dramatic view of the river gorge far below. At the "splendid house" of Nicholas Longworth with its gardens and conservatory, she saw Benjamin West's painting of Ophelia ("preposterous . . . while his Cromwell is in existence," she commented). They also met New England Unitarian Rev. Ephraim Peabody, whose preaching some thought "not a whit inferior" to Dr. Channing's. Though decrying local prejudices against abolitionists and Catholics, Martineau declared Cincinnati to be her preferred "residence to any other large city of the United States."

On a sultry June 25th the travellers left Cincinnati by steamboat for a three-day journey back up the Ohio River and across the Alleghenies to the Virginia springs. As they left, the *Cincinnati Mirror and Chronicle* printed a panegyric on Martineau's manly "strength and grasp" as well as her feminine "delicacy, feeling, and truthfulness." (When the editor of the *Cincinnati Daily Whig and Commercial Intelligencer* printed a brief defamatory remark about Martineau, the *Mirror and Chronicle* sprang to her defense with a satire on the offending editor.)⁹

As she traveled, Martineau pored over accounts of local history. In *Retrospect*, she was to insert a mini biography of Aaron Burr, recounting his trial for insurrection in 1806 and the consequent ruin of his acquaintance Herman Blennerhasset, a wealthy settler on an island in the Ohio near Marietta. As they passed the island -- though the glare from the water and the heat were intense -- Martineau rose at dawn to watch busy scenes of life on shore and river. On their first afternoon a fierce thunder and lightning storm broke out, and Martineau exclaimed over "One splendid violet-coloured shaft [that] shot straight down into the forest" causing a tree to burst into flame.

Other passengers were dull, "of the lowest class" (like those encountered on American steamboats by Dickens and Trollope?), one idle woman doing nothing all day but dressing and re-dressing her thick hair. At Catlettsburg they "bid adieu to glorious Kentucky" to land at Guyandotte, (now) West Virginia. Next morning, they "proceeded by stage . . . to Charleston on the Kanawha river," admiring the good road in "such a wild part of the country."

At their hotel, Martineau was told to look out for the Hawk's Nest as they crossed the Alleghenies. On 28 June, they then set out by stage -- sometimes leaning far out to admire the scenery as they ascended. Crimson and green creepers trailed over rocks while matted vines, rhododendrons and rock plants covered the steep slopes. Suddenly the driver slowed and shouted that he would give passengers ten minutes to see the Hawk's Nest, pointing with his whip to a path in the woods. "It seems to me now I was unaccountably cool and careless about it," Martineau later reminisced. Standing on a small platform of rock, "each arm clasping a pine-stem," she looked down at a roaring river eleven or twelve hundred feet below. The lookout had supposedly been discovered by Chief Justice Marshall, but Martineau wondered how many Indians or how many of "the mysterious race" who came before them knew of it. The moment became another high point of her American journey.

Through the Alpine-like region the road was "so new that stopping places seemed to have no names," she recounted. For two nights the stage did *not* stop until almost midnight, when passengers supped and were allowed to lie down for two hours. In *Society*, Martineau noted wryly that "Those who are impatient of fatigue should not attempt this method of reaching the Virginia Springs." Yet each new scenic wonder revived her. On 29 June at Lewisburg, they viewed the parading of an un-soldier-like militia.

They were looking forward to meeting the Charles Lorings at White Sulphur Springs and there found all the gentlemen in the piazza "in glossy coats and polished pumps; ladies in pink, blue, and white standing on green grass, shading their delicate faces and gay head-dresses under parasols." The two "heated, wearied [and] shabby" travelers dreaded shaming their friends, who nevertheless came "bounding over the green" in welcome.

In Society, under "Economy," Martineau described the "spa" built about fifteen years earlier. In addition to cabins scattered through the woodsy setting, there were public rooms, a mineral water fountain with a statue of Hygeia and a bathing-house. The guests paid eight dollars a week for room and meals served with water and milk. Martineau greeted people she had met in Mobile and New Orleans: she now had friends from "almost every State in the Union." After dinner at two, a crowd followed Martineau and Louisa to their room to make a wood fire and eat ice cream. Other guests drank the waters, played games, rambled and socialized in the ballroom.

Following a day or two at the spa, a party of six -- the two English ladies, the William Sullivans of Boston and "General Flournoy and his lady" -- left in "an extra exclusive return stage" for the Sweet Springs. Though dinner had officially ended when they arrived, they were given "hot stewed venison, beet, hominy, ham, and fruit pies." At this "inferior" establishment the season had not begun, so at sundown Martineau decided to bathe. Climbing "the breezy slope" behind the cabin, she called five times for the others without a response and then found the spring water warm and bubbly, adding that the "luxury was to have nothing to do with its disagreeable taste, but to bathe in it, as it gushes, tepid, from its spout."

Next morning at six-thirty, "steaming in the bitter cold . . . air," Martineau's party then left for a thirty-mile journey. While admiring the "cloudlike expanse of mountains," they sometimes walked and gathered wild flowers. Waiting for dinner at a house on Barber Creek, Martineau was amused by watching minnows, girls washing and a hog walking in the water. The meal, however, proved a mystery: was it mutton? pork? or dog? Riding sidesaddle with her feet "hanging over the green abyss," Martineau next spotted Fincastle, their goal for the night.

For an excursion to the Natural Bridge in Virginia, four of the party rode in the coach, Martineau and Charles Loring being on horseback and all eager to see it first. The "shrewd Yankee driver" warned it was easy to miss and smiled as they poked their horses' noses into thickets and between rocks. Suddenly Loring called out he had found it! Taken by surprise, Martineau could not "look" into what seemed a "bottomless abyss of foliage and shadow." But she climbed down the "steep, rough, rocky path" to gaze at the spectacular view from below. Under the arch in one place the "lower part of the letters G.W." could be seen, said to have been carved by George Washington. The "main central road of Virginia runs over the bridge," Martineau explained breezily in *Retrospect*, and the party now headed northeast.

(Louisa later told Henry Clay that after a "pleasant journey through the valley to Harper's Ferry," they collected their letters at the Furnesses' in Philadelphia.) Martineau had written to the agent John Ferguson that they would come to New York city "on Wed^y, with Gen^l Flournoy & party" when they hoped to stay with "M^{rs} Eaton," who had taken the house at "65 Broadway" where they stayed before. If she could not reserve an apartment for them, Martineau would trouble Ferguson to help find them lodgings.¹⁰

Having arrived in New York on 14 July, the ladies visited Long Island, Staten Island, West Point, the Catskills and Saratoga. In *Retrospect*, Martineau reported that while staying at Tivoli

"on the east bank of the Hudson" in 1834, she promised to investigate a "white speck" high in the Catskill Mountains -- the Mountain House, or Pine Orchard House, "a hotel built for the accommodation of hardy travellers." On a hot 25 July 1835, she and Louisa then made the journey by stagecoach up the steep road into the Catskills. As the coach climbed, she narrated, the air cooled gradually until "on the rocky platform above our heads" appeared what seemed "an illumined fairy palace perched among the clouds in opera scenery."

Next morning Martineau had another unforgettable experience as the sunrise gave her a vivid idea of the process of creation, from the moment when all was without form and void, to that when light was commanded. As she looked down on towns, hamlets, homes, "mountain ranges, church spires and untrodden forests," she saw "a picture of life; an epitome of the human universe." Her impression resembled that of "the spiritual Berkeley," she claimed, who saw the face of nature as "a hieroglyphic writing in the spirit itself." Martineau, indeed, anticipated Wordsworth's emblematic reading of nature in *The Prelude* (1850) and other Romantic effusions that appealed to nineteenth-century readers. From the mountain, Albany seemed no more than "an anthill in a meadow." 11

¹ For Martineau's arrival in Lexington (Kentucky) on 25 May 1835, see the Alexandria (Virginia) *Gazette* (rptd. Cincinnati [Ohio] *Gazette*, 17 June 1835).

² For the Mammoth Cave, see ["Solitaires,"] SA 1: 227-36.

³ Martineau termed Erwin "a wealthy land-owner in Kentucky": *SA* 1: 270 (Anne Erwin died in childbirth later in 1835); Charles Augustus Murray, *Travels in North America during the Years* 1834, 1835, & 1836. Including a Summer Residence with the Pawnee Tribe of Indians, in the Remote Prairies of the Missouri, and a Visit to Cuba and the Azore Islands (London: Richard Bentley, 1854) 1: 223-24.

⁴ For HM's stay with Clay, cf. SA 1: 270-76; RWT 2: 202-204; Auto. 2: 22-23.

⁵ Clarke's later contributors included Ralph Waldo Emerson and William Ellery Channing; HM to Samuel Gilman, 12 June 1835, *CL* 1: 268-71; *History of the American Compromises*. *Reprinted, with Additions, from the Daily News* [23 June 1856] (London: John Chapman, 1856): see Appen. *HM/DN*; James Freeman Clarke to Margaret Fuller, 14 June 1835 (James Freeman Clarke, *Autobiography, Diary, and Correspondence*, ed. Edward Everett Hale [Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891] 109); Clarke to HM, [before 21] June 1835, Houghton Library BMS Am 1569 (562); HM to Clarke, 21 June 1835, *CL* 1: 271-73.
6 Ellis Gray Loring to HM, 18 April 1835, *Auto*. 3: 128-30; HM to Ellis Gray Loring, 27 May 1835, *CL* 1: 267-68.

⁷ Henry Clay was to present an international copyright bill to the Senate five times between 1837 and 1842; in beginning to agitate for such a bill when she returned to Britain, Martineau signed the 1842 petition organized by Dickens and supported by Americans like Washington Irving and Horace Greeley; Clay's bill was opposed by a group of American printers and publishers and defeated in April 1842.

⁸ HM to Henry Clay, 30 June 1835, *CL* 1: 274-75; "Cincinnati" and "Probation," *RWT* 2: 215-54 and 255-69; see Trollope 1, "Schools . . . Moving Houses--Mr Flint--Literature," chap. 9, and Dickens, "From Pittsburg to Cincinnati in a Western Steamboat. Cincinnati," *American Notes*, chap. 11; *Cincinnati Mirror and Western Gazette of Literature and Science*, 3 (18 January 1834): 108; *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* 8 (17 June 1835); *Cincinnati Daily Whig and Commercial*

Intelligencer 1 (17 June 1835); Daily Cincinnati Republican and Commercial Register, 4 (19 June 1835); Liberty Hall and Cincinnati Gazette 31 (17 June 1835); HM to Harriet Beecher Stowe, 1 June 1857, Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe, ed. Annie Fields (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1897) 233; Flash's advertisements appeared in the Cincinnati Daily Whig and Commercial Intelligencer (Seat 136-37); after Martineau declared her sympathy for the abolitionists in Boston, Peabody wrote to her from New Orleans where he was trying to recover his eyesight: Ephraim Peabody to HM, 17 February [1835, wrongly dated 1834], Auto. 3: 159.

- 9 Cincinnati Mirror and Chronicle 4 (27 June and 4 July 1835): 283 and 291; Cincinnati Daily Whig and Commercial Intelligencer 1 (27 June 1835): see Seat 142-44.
- 10 "Colonel Burr," *RWT* 2: 277-92; "The Springs of Virginia," *SA* Part II (though the benefits of the waters had not been proven the proprietor/manager of the White Sulfur Springs was offered \$500,000 by a group of shareholders who wished to improve the resort; "The Natural Bridge," *RWT* 2: 270-76; Thomas Flournoy, brigadier-general in the War of 1812, and his wife; Louisa Jeffrey to Henry Clay, 19 July 1835, *The Private Correspondence of Henry Clay*, ed. Calvin Colton (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1855) 395-97 (to Clay, Louisa reported James Martineau's worry that the Tories' bribery would be "too strong for the Whigs"); HM to John Ferguson, 13 July 1835, *CL* 1: 275.
- 11 "Pine Orchard House," *RWT* 2: 270-92 and 1: 81-91; Louisa Jeffery to Henry Clay (see last note); *WR* 28 (October 1837): 42-65.