

*Gilbert.*—Oh; if wild beasts are to be found in caves, I shall keep out of them. I have no notion of being eaten up alive.

*Traveller.*—Nor would it be agreeable, when in a deep cavern, for the earth to fall in upon you; neither would you like to be suffocated with foul air.

*Edmund.*—If such dreadful things as these are liable to happen, I shall stay above ground.

*Traveller.*—I commend the wisdom of your resolution. Derbyshire is a place famous for caverns; Poole's Hole is one of them, and a curious place it is. The entrance is low, but the passage, which is narrow, soon widens, and leads into a lofty and spacious cavern, from the roof of which hang transparent crystals in masses of all shapes, formed by the dropping of the water. One of these crystal masses is called The Flitch of Bacon; another, Mary queen of Scots' pillar. This last, they say, is so called, because the queen of Scots explored the cavern to that place. The spacious and lofty cavity somewhat resembles the inside of a gothic cathedral, and as the air is tolerably pure, and no wild beasts are to be found there, perhaps, some day or other, you may venture to inspect the place, which will amply reward your pains.

*Edmund.*—Do you know why it is called Poole's Hole?

*Traveller.*—According to an old tradition, a noted outlaw of the name of Poole once lived in it; but whether there be any truth in the story I cannot tell. Elden Hole is also a great curiosity. Many people supposed it to be unfathomable, but when afterwards explored, it was found to be a rude chasm, of the depth of about two hundred feet. Three miners descended this hole in search of the bodies of some individuals who were supposed to have been robbed, murdered, and thrown into it. Peak Cavern is a truly magnificent spectacle, and has long been considered as one of the principal wonders of Derbyshire. At its entrance the huge grey rocks rise, almost perpendicularly, to the height of near three hundred feet, uniting at top, and forming a deep and gloomy recess. In front it is overhung by a vast canopy of rock, one hundred and twenty feet wide. At about ninety feet from the entrance, the roof becomes lower, and a descent leads deeper into the tremendous hollow. Here the light of day altogether disappears, and it is necessary to be provided with lighted torches to proceed further.

*Gilbert.* Ay, it must look very grand by torch-light.

*Traveller.* It does, I assure you. The passage in one part is so low, that I bumped my head against the top several times in walking along. There is a spacious opening named the Bell House, and beyond it a small lake called the First Water. This lake must be passed in a boat, though the rocky arch above it descends to within eighteen or twenty inches of the water. You would be almost frightened at your own faces, if you were to see them in that lake by torch-light. Further on is a space, in some parts a hundred and twenty feet high, and more than two hundred long and broad, and then the Second Water is seen. Roger Rann's House is a projecting pile of rocks, whence large drops of water fall continually through the crevices of the roof. Beyond this is a tremendous hollow, called the Chancel. As I entered the Chancel every thing was silent as night, when suddenly the voices of several persons singing burst forth from the upper regions of the place. I was struck with amazement, for it seemed as though the cavern was inhabited; and not being able to discern any one in the direction whence the voices came, I was obliged to inquire of the guides. Soon after this eight or ten women and children were plainly seen standing in the hollow of a rock fifty feet above the floor; these were the choristers who had entertained us with their voices.

*Gilbert.*—How astonishing I should have been!

*Traveller.*—One part of the cave is called the Cellar, and another the Half-way House; but the hollow called the Great Torn of Lincoln is the most remarkable. The regularity of the rock in this place, the stream flowing below, and the beauty of the roof, form a very interesting picture. One of the guides wedged some gunpowder into the rock, and exploded it, when the sound rolled along the roof and sides like a continued peal of thunder. My mind was quite solemazed by the terrific hollowings which echoed around me, and I thought of that great and terrible day, "in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." We are all too apt to forget these things, unless at such seasons when something remarkable occurs to remind us of them. The entire length of the cavern is 2250 feet, and the depth of it, from the surface of the Peak mountain, about 620. Though it is interesting to explore

the holes and caves of the earth, it is yet very delightful once more to get above ground, where the air is purer, the light more cheerful, and the whole face of creation more inviting. When deprived for a season of the blessings we enjoy, we invariably value them more. Often and often has this fact been impressed on my mind by my past experience.

*Edmund.*—If ever I go into Derbyshire, I shall be sure to find out Peak Cavern.

While the traveller described the different caverns that he had visited, Mr. and Mrs. Lovel purposely abstained from making any remark, that the young people might enjoy themselves the more freely, and make their own observations.

*Traveller.*—I must not forget the Crystallized Cavern, the new wonder of the Derbyshire Peak. Its entrance has a very terrific appearance, but the different crystallizations soon occupy the whole attention of those who explore it. You would stare with astonishment at the Music Chamber, for in the part which goes by that name the petrifications are like the pipes of an organ; but in other places they form themselves into elegant colonnades, as regularly formed as though they had been shaped with the chisel.

*Leonard.*—That organ would please me as much as anything.

*Traveller.*—After the guides had placed lighted candles in different parts of this place I could have imagined myself in a sort of fairy land. Many a fanciful account of palaces glittering with gold and precious stones, which I had read in the days of my youth, occurred to my memory. Indeed it was one of the most costly and magnificent spectacles that I had ever seen.

*Gilbert.*—That must have been worth going under ground to see.

*Traveller.*—Yet, beautiful as it was, it was greatly surpassed by an excavation about a hundred yards further on. This was called the Grotto of Paradise, being lighted up, it burst upon me with all its glory. I thought of the infinite power of God, who could thus clothe the barren caves of the earth with almost insufferable splendour, and wanted words to express myself, but I found them not. I was dumb with astonishment. The place appeared as if lighted up with the most elegant glass chandeliers, while innumerable crystals of all hues blazed around me;

Ten thousand gems burst on my sight  
With countless hues of living light.

*Edmund.*—It does not signify, but I must see the Derbyshire caverns.

*Traveller.*—I have not half described the Crystallized Cavern; but, in my estimation, no other part of it equalled the Music Chamber and the Grotto of Paradise. The Cumberland, Smedley, and Rudland caverns are all worth the notice of the curious. The first of these is an apartment decorated with what is called snow fossil, a petrification which, in figure and colour, closely resembles snow when drifted by the wintry storm into the cavities of a rock. But I must hasten away from the Derbyshire caverns to speak of others equally remarkable. On the south side of Merdip hills, near Wells, there is a famous grotto, called Okey Hole, about 200 yards long. This is much visited, though it is not of the magnitude of those I have described to you. A stream of water rises at the far end of this cavern, strong enough to turn a mill. Plenty of eels are found there, and some trout. In a dry summer, frogs may be seen crawling about the floor and crevices, and multitudes of bats cling to the roof. Pen Park Hole is near Bristol. Captain Sturmy, attended by others, descended this place by means of ropes. He found a stream running there more than a hundred feet broad, and nearly fifty deep. A miner, who was with him, fancied that he saw something frightful in the cavern; and, as the captain died of a fever soon after he explored this place, strange tales got abroad, which prevented others from descending. At last Captain Collins resolved to go down; so taking several of his men with ropes and tackling, as well as measuring lines, candles, torches, and a speaking-trumpet, he commenced his enterprise. The result was, that the place was neither so remarkable nor so fearful as it had been supposed to be; though I dare say, that if you were to descend, you would find enough to astonish you.

*Gilbert.*—Captain Collins went the right way to work, in taking men with him, and ropes, and tackling, and candles, and torches, and a speaking-trumpet.

*Traveller.*—The cavern of Dunmow Park, near Kilkenny, in Ireland, is a great curiosity. The hole by which I descended it with a friend, was near forty yards across; shrubs and trees grow out of its sides, and wild pigeons and jackdaws were flying from one part of it to another. At the bottom of the pit the spar was