

sudden was it that there were to me but two sensations—the one of clinging wildly to the yielding brushwood, the other of a sharp, convulsive jerk that stunned me. My first impulse when I came to my senses was to rise, but the agony at once sufficed to show me that I had broken my leg and badly hurt my shoulder. Still my presence of mind did not forsake me. Although every movement gave me the most excruciating pain, I managed to draw from my pocket my box of wax matches, and with extreme difficulty to strike a light; but being able to see but little with this, I placed a pile of them on the ground and lit them. Then what a sight met my gaze. I was in a lofty cavern whose walls were hung with glistening crystals; massive pillars rose here and there in fantastic shapes, while great blocks of glistening ores flashed back their rays of gold and silver from a hundred sides. At my feet ran a black, slimy stream, that I could hear in the distance falling with a sullen roar into some hidden depths below. In a moment I knew all. I was in the stalactite cavern!

Then the matches went out, and left me to the impenetrable darkness, the drip, drip, dripping of the crystals, and the hollow, distant moan of the falling stream. Heaven help me! what was to become of me? I shouted, and from twenty echoes my voice came back to me, like the mocking of demons. Then the pain in my leg and shoulder became unbearable, and I pictured to myself my going delirious and dying of hunger and of being found weeks hence, perhaps months, for few visitors I knew came to these places in the winter time, lying dead where I then lay.

Then, in spite of pain and anxiety, the cold drove me into a kind of fitful doze, and for an hour I almost slept. When I awoke, a faint ray of light quivered round me, and I was enabled to see somewhat more of my whereabouts. Just above me was the hole through which I had fallen, and around me lay some of the debris that I had brought down with me in my struggles.

I could see into the bright air above, and once more I gathered up all my strength to shout; but my voice seemed like me to be bound in that terrible dungeon, and wasted itself in vain echoes, weaker and weaker, till in the blank distance it died altogether away.

I pictured to myself the joyous crowds going to church, and the happy day all England would have but me. I teased my fancy by imagining rich dainties and fresh drinks, for I was faint and feverish, and then I fell into a torpid stupor of deadened despair that lasted for hours. From this I was awakened by the sharp, clear-ringing tinkle of a sheep bell. Then once more I shouted. I yelled and shrieked with all the agony of desperation, and fell back exhausted on the cold rock.

Then, in a few minutes, my heart gave a great bound as I heard something splashing in the stream higher up from where I lay. I turned my eager gaze there, and with aching eyes tried to penetrate into the blackness. Nearer something came, and nearer, and at last, shaking the water from him on all sides, a noble colley-dog crept from the stream into the light before me. At first he refused to come close to me, but at last he yielded to my coaxing, and I clasped him round the neck. The splendid brute seemed then for the first time to realize that I was wounded; with gentle softness he licked