

Indeed it was

A cave where no daylight enters,
But cats and badgers are forever bred.

The internal convulsion had been such as to separate into nearly equal divisions the rock on either side. At the extreme end of the rent was an entrance supported by arches of human artifice, which not even the earthquake had been mighty enough to disturb. Beyond all was dark and gloomy. Our interest now was excited to a pitch which admitted no thought of fatigue or personal discomfort. Securing, therefore, a sufficient number of lanterns, spades, picks and excavating materials, together with two natives, we commenced the exploration. For a distance of twenty feet there were evidences to be seen of a vestibule with groined roof and tessellated pavement, the walls of which, when freed from that slimy moss which always adheres to solid materials in damp and darksome places, were found to be covered with hieroglyphics and strange lettering. Generally they were illegible, the incrustations of mineral earth having effaced letters and whole sentences. Some of the words were apparently of old Spanish dialect—snatches of warlike chants and deeds. Other inscriptions were written with the old square character assimilating to the Hebrew, though they were more probably Arabic. In a niche cut out of the face of the rock were the remains of a sarcophagus, covered at the head with inscriptions, and at the foot with the representation of one vessel pursuing another. The bones of the cranium still remained, with portions of others, in the sarcophagus; these, together with an iron urn, were all that could be found in this connection. So far, there was no clue to this mystery, owing to our inability to translate what was written. There was little or no resemblance between the old and modern Spanish. All we could do was to take impressions and seek further. We came now to an abrupt turn on the left, though this direct entrance had been continued, no doubt, some distance; but all passage way in a direct line was entirely obstructed by the earth which had fallen in. Passing then to the left, through long rows of crumbling conglomerate pillars, wreathed

with carved snakes and oak leaves, we came suddenly upon a wide and lofty hall full of remains of ancient trophies. A large stone table ran midway down the centre for half the entire length, with rows of curiously carved chairs arranged on either side. At the extreme end of the room was an elevated platform of delicate workmanship. On the face of the key-stone of the arch of the hall under which this regal throne (for so I supposed it to be) was raised, was carved a crown, and an inscription which, in Arabic, would be "El Kuds"—"The Holy." Here were blades of Moorish scimitars—eaten almost beyond recognition by rust—greaves, and crests of olden time device. Underneath each chair was chiselled out of solid stone a single word, probably the name of him who occupied it. While trying to decipher the inscription underneath the seat of honor with the help of chisel and hammer, I struck somewhat heavily upon a letter which was more obliterated than the others, when with a groan the whole mass seemed to revolve as if moved by superhuman power. I felt myself moving backward, and could see that the floor of the hall had divided itself into two equal parts which receded from each other. Wider and wider grew the gap, the floor creaking on rusty hinges which croaked hideously at the loathsome revelation it was about to make. Up poured the foul and pestilential air, pent up for ages in this "durance vile." The hot and fetid breath struck the face and paled the cheek with sickening horror. For a moment I had well nigh succumbed with nervous fear and nausea, but braced myself as well as possible, awaiting further developments. What occupied in reality but a minute or two, seemed an hour; and I thought the horrid creaking would never cease, nor the 'noxious gases ever purify themselves in better atmosphere. But pause at last it did, and together with my companions I commenced an investigation. A curious network of wheels and mechanical contrivances, of which I had accidentally struck the motive power, had rolled back on either side the massive floor, and left an opening of six feet at least in width, and in length corresponding to the width of the hall. We approached cautiously,