

from the prolonged excursion the traveller once more salutes the light of day, it is with a satisfaction easily comprehended.

[We may add that, in the opinion of our most eminent geologists, this remarkable cavern is part of the channel of a subterranean river which existed in a former condition of the earth's surface.]

The great caverns of the valley of Castleton, in the Peak district of Derbyshire, whose total length exceeds one thousand yards, recall, though on a smaller scale, the magnificent subterranean grottoes of North America, which we have just described. They offer a similar succession of cavities and defiles, of bottomless abysses, of subterranean lakes, and of massive columns, formed of brilliant stalactites, which support the gloomy roof, and glitter in the reflected light of the torches ; in a word, they combine all the marvels of the subterranean world.

[Who has not heard of Eldon Hole, a deep yawning chasm opened in the solid limestone rock ! In the reign of Elizabeth, the Earl of Leicester is said to have bribed a man to descend into it for the purpose of ascertaining its extent and configuration. He was lowered a distance of seven hundred feet, and for a while remained suspended in the abyss ; then he was drawn up to the surface, but in a frenzied condition, and never recovering his senses, he died eight days afterwards. To this incident Cotton alludes in some quaint verses :—

“ Once a mercenary fool, 'tis said, exposed
His life for gold, to find what lies inclosed
In this obscure vacuity, and tell
Of stranger sights than Theseus saw in hell ;
But the poor wretch paid for his thirst of gain.
For being craned up with a distempered brain,
A faltering tongue, and a wild staring look,
He lived eight days, and then the world forsook.”

But, in reality, Eldon Hole is not more than 200 feet in depth, 20 in width, and 60 in length. In the “ Philosophical Transactions for 1781,” the descent is recorded of a Mr. Lloyd, who was let down with a rope by eight men, and found the light at the bottom of sufficient clearness for him to read a printed book.

The Peak Cavern in Castleton Dale is surrounded by still grander accessories. The approach to it is in itself a magnificent picture. Immense perpendicular rocks rise on either hand, hemming in a rugged and gloomy defile, through which a rivulet issues from the cave, and tumbles and foams over a limestone bed. Suddenly a wall of rock rises sheer and abrupt before the traveller, and in it the mouth of the cavern, presenting the form of a depressed arch 120 feet wide, 42 feet high, and about 90 in depth. On entering, you observe with surprise that a colony of twine-makers have established themselves within the recess ; their machinery and strange appearance blending not inharmoniously with the strange features of the scene. We advance about thirty yards, to find the roof diminishing in height, the day utterly disappearing, and a settled darkness brooding in the narrow corridor, which is but