

thing seemed ever to venture down into this dreary den. Away it stretched to the right hand and the left, in long withdrawing vistas of gloom, broken, as we could faintly see, by the light which, entering from other openings along the hillside, fell here and there on some hoary pillar, and finally vanished into the shade.

It is needless to recall what achievements we performed; how, with true boyish hardihood, we essayed to climb the pillars, or crept along the ledges of rock that overhung the murky water, to let a ponderous stone fall plump into the depths, and mark how long the bubbles continued to rise gurgling to the surface, and how long the reverberations of the plunge came floating back to us from the far-off recesses of the cave. Enough, that, having satisfied our souls with the wonders below ground, we set out to explore those above.

“But where are the petrified forests and fishes?” cried one of the party. “Here!” “Here!” was shouted in reply from the top of the bank by two of the ringleaders on the previous Saturday. We made for the heap of broken stones whence the voices had come, and there, truly, on every block and every fragment the fossils met our eye, sometimes so thickly grouped together that we could barely see the stone on which they lay. I bent over the mound, and the first fragment that turned up (my first-found fossil) was one that excited the deepest interest. The commander-in-chief of the first excursion, who was regarded (perhaps as much from his bodily stature as for any other reason) an authority on these questions, pronounced my treasure-trove to be, unmistakably and unequivocally, a fish. True, it seemed to lack head and tail and fins; the liveliest fancy amongst us hesitated as to which were the scales; and in after years I learned that it was really a vegetable—the