

could have but got rid of the recollection that it had been scooped out by handfuls for a far different purpose than that of making a grotto, I would have deemed it one of the finest caverns I ever saw. Immediately beside where the vaulted corridor enters the gallery, there is a wide dark chasm in the floor, furnished with a rusty chain-ladder, that gives perilous access to the lower workings of the hill. There was not light enough this evening to show half-way down ; but far below, in the darkness, I could see the fiery glimmer of a torch reflected on a sheet of pitch-black water ; and I afterwards learned that a branch of the Dudley and Birmingham Canal, invisible for a full mile, has been carried thus far into the bowels of the hill. I crossed over the nest-like valley scooped in the summit of the eminence, — a picturesque, solitary spot, occupied by a corn-field, and feathered all around on the edges with wood ; and then crossing a second deep excavation, which, like the gallery described, is solely the work of the miner, I struck over a range of green fields, pleasantly grouped in the hollow between the Wren's-Nest-hill and the Castle-hill of Dudley, and reached the town just as the sun was setting. The valleys which interpose between the three Silurian islets of the Dudley basin are also Silurian ; and as they have been hollowed by the denuding agencies out of useless beds of shale and mudstone, the miner has had no motive to bore into their sides and bottom, or to cumber the surface, as in the surrounding coal-field, with the ruins of the interior ; and so the valleys, with their three lovely hills, form an oasis in the waste.