

But, after all, there are no caverns like those of nature's making: they speak to the imagination in a bolder and freer style than any mere excavation of the quarrier, however huge; and we find, in consequence, that they have almost always engaged tradition in their behalf. There hangs about them some old legend of spectral shapes seen flitting across the twilight vestibule; or of ancient bearded men, not of this world, standing, porter-like, beside the door; or of somnolent giants reposing moodily in the interior; or of over-bold explorers, who wandered so deep into their recesses that they never again returned to the light of day. I bethought me, when in Sir Roderick's lecture-room, of one of the favorite haunts of my boyhood,—a solitary cave, ever resounding to the dash of the billows,—and felt its superiority. Hollowed of old by the waves of an unfrequented shore, just above the reach of the existing tide-line,—its gray roof bristling with stalactites, its gray floor knobbed with stalagmite,—full of all manner of fantastic dependencies from the top and sides,—with here little dark openings branching off into the living rock, and there unfinished columns standing out from it, roughened with fretted irregularities, and beaded with dew,—with a dim twilight resting even at noonday within its further recesses, and steeped in an atmosphere of unbreathing silence, rarely broken save by the dash of the wave or the shriek of the sea-fowl,—it is at all times a place where the poetry of deep seclusion may be felt,—the true hermit-feeling, in which self is absorbed and forgotten amid the silent sublimities of nature. The unfrequent visiter scares the seal from the mid-tide rock in the opening, or encounters the startled otter in its headlong retreat to the sea. But it seemed redolent, when I last saw it, of a still higher poetry. Night had well-nigh fallen, though the nearly vanquished daylight still struggled with the darkness. The moon at full rose slowly over the sea,