

The Peak in the Days of Queen Anne.

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AS Derbyshire men, we owe a great debt to Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, who by his book, *De Mirabilibus Pecci*, first made known to a wondering world the marvels of our high Peakland. Amongst the gay courtiers of the second Charles the Peak was regarded as a place of exile, to which unfaithful or rebellious wives could be banished by their indignant spouses. As Pepys remarks in his *Diary*, "My lord (Chesterfield) did presently pack his lady into the country in Derbyshire near the Peake, which is become a proverb at Court—to send a man's wife to the Devil's [cave] o' Peake when she vexes him." In emulation of Hobbes, Charles Cotton wrote the *Wonders of the Peak*, which was published in 1681. Belauded by the ponderous hexameters of Hobbes, and the inharmonious iambics of Cotton, the marvels of our county attracted the curiosity of the beaux and quidnuncs of London: in consequence, many learned travellers, exploring the then unknown wilds of their native land, turned their footsteps, with hope and expectation, towards the northern districts of Derbyshire. Of such was the imaginative writer whose turgid prose has been preserved in volume 783 of the Rawlinson MSS. in the Bodleian Library.

To his name and profession we have no clue. From the internal evidence, supplied by his journal, he must have been a man of some erudition, as he seems familiar with the Latin classics, and, to judge from certain technical expressions, not unversed in legal lore. I should conjecture that he was a lawyer of one

of the Inns of Court or Chancery, who, as he states, "set out from the metropolis the 5th September, 1709, accompanied by Mr. Rogers, the gentleman to whom this discourse is dedicated."

He was certainly a lowlander, as he describes our modest hills and woodland wastes as prodigious mountains and amazing deformities, and the ordinary rough roads of a hilly country are invested with terrors which are truly ludicrous. It was a wonder that he lived to tell the tale of his travels, so often was he in danger of being "dash'd to peices" by "Horrid Rocks" or over "Stupendous Precipices." The members of the Alpine and Himalayan Clubs should hide their abashed faces in presence of such daring temerity as our travellers displayed. We are not told what Mr. Rogers thought of it all; but no doubt he was consoled for all the perils he had encountered, and all the fatigues he had endured, by the dedication to him of this grandiloquent effusion.

Our author shows great admiration for the works of Hobbes and Cotton, and in one point he resembles both those writers, in that his imagination is much stronger than his rhymes.

Certainly our ancestors were a credulous race, and ready to accept as "wonders" the most ordinary phenomena. Of the seven wonders of the Peak sung by Hobbes and Cotton, certainly Chatsworth is wonderful in its way, and the Peak Cavern and Poole's Hole are natural curiosities, though not so extensive as some of the caves at Cheddar; but to the casual critic Buxton Well is but one amongst a score of similar springs in England, Mam Tor is an inconsiderable hill of loose shale, Eldon Hole a small chasm in the mountain limestone, and the Ebbing and Flowing Well a mere row of befouled cattle troughs*.

But let our traveller speak for himself:—

"Next morning we enterred Derbyshire bounded on y^e South by Leicestershire on y^e East by Nottingham West by Staffordshire and northwards it joins to Yorkshire. The river Derwent

This natural example of the siphon system, which was once deemed worthy of being classed amongst the wonders of the Peak, sadly needs attention. Mr. Hubbersty, on behalf of the Society, is endeavouring to provide for its preservation.—Ed.

divides it in two parts running from North to South where it empties itself into Trent. The East and South parts are fertile and produce good store of barley and other corn; the rest is altogether Mountainous & Barren but yielding much Lead, Copper, & Coles, Alabaster & Marble. In this County among others dwelt the Coritani in y^e time of the Romans; during y^e Heptarchy twas a province of Merica and is now in the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry.

“Being upon the entrance of these dangerous Moors which stretch themselves along the Northern Limits of the County we hired a guide to Chatsworth.

“Now twas that nature began to change her Face and our Eyes werē entertained with the most amazing Deformity in the world. Here were Mountains crowding upon Mountains, prodigious Rocks, deep Chasms, and dangerous Precipices. These Moors are often fatal to strangers.

“They tell us a story of a Poor Man who traveling this Road and being benighted lost his way. He wandered several hours immured with dangers; at last both he and his Horse sunk into a Bog. The Horse endeavouring to save himself was overwhelmed and never seen more, and he with much difficulty escaped the same Fate. The miserable wretch remained three days in a comfortless condition floating in a sea of Mud, and expecting every moment to be lost. At last his Cries drew some Gentlemen who were traveling this way to his assistance, who immediately contrived his safety and getting Ropes at an adjoining village removed him from the mire just as he was expiring.

“These Moors have a deluding aspect being covered with a smooth Turfe, so that strangers deceived by the beautiful Appearance are often in great hazard of their Lives.

“In this manner we proceeded either in danger of being Swallowed up in these Bogs or in sooty waves of some Streams we were forced to pass, or else in fear of being dash’d to pieces while we stormed the Ascent of prodigious Mountains, which seemed to wrap their heads in the Cloudes. The Road we went

gave us frightful Apprehensions, while on the one hand we beheld a Gloomy Descent into the hollow Gapings of the Earth, so black and dreadful that the most daring are amazed to view y^e surprising Abyss, and on y^e other hand impending Mountains threatened us with ruin. When we had measured about six miles we saw a Tower fixt on y^e summit of a rising Mount, and when we came to It our Eyes were delighted with the pleasing Prospect of CHATSWORTH the seat of the Duke of Devonshire. Eden in all Its Glorys had nothing more surprising then* what we saw here. We found the descent to It very fatiguing to our horses, by reason of the vast stones that in many Places obstructed our Passage. We had here at once the most beautifull and most deformed seens in y^e world. On the one Hand y^e house and garden and on the other all y^e Monstrous Views of Nature in an undress. It was dark by that time we have conquered the Descent which obliged us to put of the sight of y^e House till y^e next morning. This is the first of the Seven Wonders of the Peake comprehended by Mr. Hobbs in this Line,

‘Ædes, Mons, Barathrum, Binus Fons, Antraque bina,’
all of which I shall speak of in their order.

“THE WONDERS OF THE PEAKE.

“*Chatsworth*.—This stately Pile stands on y^e Banks of Derwent which washes the front. There are a noble pair of Iron Gates of the same Breadth of the House, guarded on each side with two Pillars of Stone finely carved. Thro’ the gates you enter a large outer Court which leads you towards the Pile. Before you can enter the House you ascend by several steps upon a noble Terrace, which binds the Frontispeice, enclosed by curious Iron works. After this you are admitted thro y^e Lodge into a spacious square Court, embraced round by the Buildings, which are supported on the Right and Left by several Pillars (Doric Columns) which form two stately Piazzas.

“You cross the Court thro’ a large Portico into one of the noblest Halls in the Universe.

* The original MS. is being followed verbatim.—ED.

"The amazed Spectator is dazled with the Magnificence. The carving and gilding is excellently performed. The Eye is deceived with Breathing Pictures, and every part splendidly adorned that y^e soul is lost in admiration.

"But to describe y^e other Apartments would take up a Volumn. The wonderful Entrance of the Staircase is amazing. The Grotto and Bath not to be parallel'd. The Galleries richly gilded and painted and the Chappel made up of all the Treasures of Art and Fancy. In a word the whole betrays such Harmony, Beauty, and Magnificence as is not be equalled in Europe.

"Having done with the House we were invited to a Prospect of the Gardens.

"You enter first upon a spacious Parterre deck'd in all the delights of Flora. In the midde whereof is a famous Fountain, composed of several Sea-horses, which raising themselves above the water and curling their scaly Tails vent streams of water through their mouths and nostrils.

On the right Hand is a Bowling Green, and neer that a Circular Pool, from the centre whereof there ascends a Rock, where Neptune is represented Brandishing his Trident in a furious manner, defending himself against several Tritons who assault him with the watry element.

"The Parterre finished itself in a large Chanel, shaded on each side by Groves of Cypress, at one end whereof there rises a vast body of water shaped like a Pillar, which mounts near forty feet above the Superficies, and at the top diffuses itself into a shower.

"Under the brow of the lofty mountain which embraces part of the garden we saw a quadrangular Pile, every angle graced with statues representing Rivers. These having Pots under their Armes pour out great quantities of water into a Cascade about one hundred and twenty yards long; which being made declining with severall falls paved at y^e Bottom and Edges. The water moves the ear with very agreeable murmurs.

"At a little distance is a Fountain which emits streams of water near sixty feet high.

"We exchanged this object for another plac'd in y^e centre of a Gloomy Labarynth called the Mourning Willow. Tis an artificial Tree, but so nearly resembling Nature as hardly to be distinguished at first view. There are secret veins dispersed thro' every part of the Tree, thro' which the water is conveyed, and drops from every leaf and Twig like Tears, and from thence receives its name. But on a sudden (a Cock being turned) it flies out with great violence, wetting the beholders with a Plentifull Shower.

"On the West side of the House are severall Aviaries, Greenhouse, and Nurseries, and near them a large Kitchen garden abounding in divers Esculents.

"There are many more diverting curiosities in the garden, as Status, Grottos, pleasant walks, and Avenues, Aqueducts and other Hortulane Ornaments which I shall omit speaking of.

"From thence we removed to *Castleton* a Place famous for two other wonders viz. *Mam Tor* and that wondrous Cave called the Devil's [Cave]. In our way we passed by several Lead mines. There is a custom in this part of the County, that if any person whatsoever finds a vein of Lead, tho' he has no right to the soil, y^e Discovery vests an immediate Property in him and he may dig and convert the profits to his own use, paying Dutys and Taxes.* The miners presented us with severall Fluors, which they dig from among the Oar, being of a whitish complexion, and from their Transparency and other Properties much like Christal.

* This right is noted in that curious metrical version of mining laws composed by "Edward Manlove, Esq., Steward of the Burghmoot Court in Wirksworth," as being conferred by 16 E. 1., c. 2, after an Inquisition held at Ashbourne in the same year.

"By custom old in Wirksworth wapentake
If any of this nation find a rake
Or sign, or leading to the same, may set
In any ground and there lead oar may get:
They may make crosses, holes, and set their stowes,
Sink shafts, build lodges, cottages or coes.
But churches, houses, gardens, all are free
From this strange custom of the minery."

See also Glover's *History of Derbyshire*, vol. 1, app. 9.

"*Castleton* is a small village, and takes its name from the Castle on the Top of an adjoining Hill, which seems from its situation to have been impregnable, being fixt on the summit of a high and dangerous Precipice and having no way to it but one. Distant from this place about half a mile is *Mamtor* a Prodigious Mountain from whose top the earth (they say) is continually mouldring down and yet never wasts. This is an erroneous opinion of the Natives, for any person who examines the place may perceive a Sensible Diminution of the sandy heap by the vast stones and Turfe which hang suspended in the air, and are often seen to fall down by the neighbouring people. Returning again to *Castleton* we went to see:—

"*The Devil's [Cave]* which yawns at the Foot of that Rock which supports y^e Castle, I mentioned before. The entrance appears so black and Dreadful that it tries the Resolution of the most daring Adventurer. The nearer you approach the more your surprise encreases, while your eyes are terrified by the menacing Aspect of Impending Rocks, and your Ears with the strong Bellowing of Subterranean Rivers. We no sooner entered it but many of the Poor People from the Town came with candles and offered themselves as our guides. Ovid's description of the Palace of Somnus agrees very well with this place:—

"Est prope Cimmerios longo spelunca recessu
Mons cavus ignavi domus et penetralia somni
Quo nunquam radiis oriens mediusve cadensve
Phœbus adire potest. Nebuke caligine mistæ
Exhalantur humo; dubiæque crepuscula lucis."

"Which may be thus translated—

"Near *Castleton* by a steep mountain's side
There yawns a dreadful cavern deep and wide,
Within the chambers of these dark aboads
The Sloathful God of Sleep supinely nods,
Where *Phœbus* ne'er dismissed one beam of Light—
The Seat of Chaos and Eternal Night."

"The Dangers and Horror that surrounded us could not hinder admiration from exerting itself to see the labour of the Almighty Architect. Tis surprising that so spacious an arch

should bear the ponderous mountains that are above without anything to support it in the middle. We had scarcely measured 100 yards but the arched roof descended so low that we were compelled to creep on all four till we came to the margin of a sooty River* about five yards over. Here we were irresolute whether to advance further or not. The Danger that appeared before us bid us return. But then the Itch of Curiosity animated our halting Resolutions and moved us to a farther Discovery. Immediately two Rusticks were ready to attend us, who laying us in a Tub waded through and wafted us over one after another. The Passage was very Affrighting, in all the way over, the descending Rock almost touched our faces. And the great Rains that happened about that time had so increased the waters that should they be swelled by any additional showers three Inches, our Return would be rendered impossible. As soon as we had conquered the further shore the Vault began to enlarge and affords something that pleasingly rewarded our Labours. The Shining Roof dazzled the eye with its brightness, and looked more like the Palace of a Prince than any of Nature's productions: all round the Chequered Configuration of the Rock present you with a scene truly admirable, where you find the hand of Nature forming a more Beautiful Scheme of Architecture than 'er was compiled by Art. From hence we were obliged to follow our guide thro' a narrow Passage where we were almost pressed to pieces by pointed stones that guarded each side of the place, till at last we came to a second River. Here we expressed the same fear as before; but being immured to danger we ventured over. But what a dismal Change was here! From so beautiful a place as I before described to one of the most amazing Prospects of Confusion and Deformity.

“‘Horor ubique animos simul ipsa silentia terret.’ We saw nothing but rocks piled upon one another, which we must

* “Sooty” seems to be used in the sense of “dark,” “gloomy,” as the water issuing from the Peak Cavern is wonderfully clear and free from impurity.

clamber o'r, e'r we can pursue our Security. With much Difficulty we advanced, till the cave enlarged, and discovered another stately apartment, curiously arched, and adorned with the same shining matter I spoke of above. We went not many paces further e'r we saw the third River where the Rock descended so low as to admit of no further Discovery.

Sed revocare gradus superasque evadere ad auras
Hoc opus, hic labor est.

"But now we began to think of a Return, and were consulting how to extricate ourselves from the gloomy Labarynth. With much ado we found our way back thro' y^e many windings of y^e cave to our guides whom we left behind at the first River, who welcomed us with their Lights and conducted us out with joyful Salvos and Acclamations.

"The Inhabitants presented us with several stones like shels of snails, cockle, escallops,* &c.

"The next morning we went towards Buxton, but stop'd in the Way to see

"*Eldon-Hole*. It opens on the side of a step Hill and is wall'd round lest the sheep that feed thereabouts should fall in. The mouth of it is wide and Rocky, tho' lower it is more contracted and narrow. It appears so black and Deep that few Travellers have the courage to approach it. There are severall Rusticks that attend us, and divert us by casting in great stones, which striking against the Sollid Ribbs of the Abyss rose like repeated Claps of Thunder. Still as they descend the noise continues, till at last growing weaker and weaker they whisper out their distance with a sort of hissing as if they dropt into water. Men of Fancy imagine it the seat of Imprisoned Winds and endeavour to recommend their Dreams as Experimental. Tho' I can assure my Reader that while I was here I could not perceive y^e least breath of Air.

"They tell us the story of a man who ventured down by a Rope into the Bottomless Cavern. He took a Bell with him to give notice to those above when he would be drawn up again.

* Probably small fossils from the mountain limestone.

They let him down so low that the Bell could not be heard; at last having given him all the Line they could, and not hearing the Bell drew him up, but were surprised to find the Poor man distracted: his eyes rolled and were ready to start from their Fountains: his Tongue was void of utterance, and everything betrayed the misfortune of the Poor Wretch. He dyed immediately, and as to the Cause of his disorder, whether from the fear of falling or the sight of Ghosts or Spectrums, or what else nobody cou'd conjecture.*

"There is another melancholy story of the Place so related by Mr. Cotton. A gentleman traveling this road and being overtaken by night applyed himself to a neighbouring Village for Direction. He had presently two fellows to attend him who perceiving his Portmantua to be well stuff'd immediately contrived his Ruin. They pretended a greate care of his person, and when they were near Eldon Hole he was desired to alight and walk over a place they represented dangerous. The gentleman obeyed and one of the Rogues took his Horse, while the other lead him by the Arm; and when they came to the mouth of this Horrid Gulf they push'd him headlong into it. The Unfortunate Stranger apprehensive of his misfortune shook the chambers of y^e gloomy Abyss with his dying groans and cries while his body was dash'd in a thousand peices against the pointed stones, which remained coloured with his Blood.

"O Horred Act of Villainy! But Heaven that never lets such crimes pass with Impunity found one of the Authors of

* This story is taken from Hobbes' *De Mirabilibus Pecci*. The man was said to have been hired by Dudley, Earl of Leicester. A person, quoted by Catcott in the *Treatise on the Deluge*, declares that he let down a line nine hundred and ninety-three yards without meeting the bottom.

In the year 1770 Mr. John Lloyd, F.R.S., descended into Eldon Hole and reached the bottom sixty-two yards from the mouth, and discovered several interesting caves hung with stalactites. Other descents have been made, verifying the fact that this "bottomless abyss" is only about seventy yards deep. No bones or other remains have been found to support the Cottonian legend, but the floor was so covered with the stones which have been thrown in by thousands of curious visitors that anything of the kind would only be found by excavation.

this Inhuman Action, for the man being tortured by an uneasy Conscience confessed the fact and suffer'd condign punishment: but the other could never yet be heard of.

"Mr. Cotton sounded this place above eight hundred and eighty-four yards, but could find no Bottom.

"Not far from here is Tideswell whiche is Reported to observe its Constant Tides four times in the Hour. But some persons distrusting the verity of this matter we thought it not worth our while to visit the place.*

"About three miles hence is Buxton famous for the Bath dedicated to St. ANN. The waters are extreemly warm, are much courted in the summer by y^e Nobility and Gentry, having a medicinal vertue in em good for the Stomach nerves, sinews and the whole body.† Near it is a Cold Spring whose waters are esteemed good against many distempers.

"[A gentleman that was traveling showed me an Almanack of the Danish invention. It was about 2 foot long 4 square and not like what Dr. Plot met in Staffordshire yet essentially the same.]‡

"Sir Thomas Delves of Dodington in the Co. of Chester Bar^t having long languished under an Asthma was cured by drinking these waters. In memory whereof he has covered it with a strong stone Building. Near the Hot Bath are these encomiastic Lines. I give you em exactly as they are written—

"Corpore debilior, Geani se proluit undis
Quærit aquas Aponi, quam febris atra necat
Ut penitus Renam purget, cur Psaulia tanta
Vel quæ dant Radiis pectora Calderiæ?
Sota mihi Buxtona placet Buxtona Britannus
Unda, Granus, Aponus, Psaulia, Calderia."

* Our traveller apparently got confused between Tideswell and the Ebbing and Flowing Well, which was one of Hobbes' and Cotton's "Wonders."

† Glover gives a list of seventy-six medicinal springs in Derbyshire.

‡ These clog almanacks, as they were called, were in common use in England from the time of the Saxons—they may have been introduced by the Danes. An engraving of Dr. Plot's Staffordshire Clog can be seen in *The Reliquary*, vol. v., p. 124. The clog almanack shown to our travellers may have been one of those now preserved in the Chetham Library in Manchester. It was presented by Mr. John Moss in 1711, two years afterwards.

"Which will bear this Translation—

"To Granus healing waters let him haste
Who finds his Body thro' consumption wast,
When the Blood suffers by a febril fire
To cooling Aponus for care retire.
And why so noted are ye Psaulian streams
But as they purge and purify the Reins;
The waters y^t from famed Calderia spring
Assistance to a weakened optick bring.
But Buxton has a general healing power
And yields to every Disease a cure."

"I observed while I was bathing on one side of the well
a Cold spring which flowed up among the other waters. If you
put your foot upon the place where it bubbles up you feel it
wonderfull cold while your upper parts are quite warm, so that
you may be said, as the ingenious Mr. Cotton expresses it,

"t'endure

At once an ague and a calenture."

"I shall conclude my observations on this place (which were
the Roads as passable would be noted as those springs in Somers-
setshire) with the Lines of Mr. Hobbs—

"Divæ sacer est fons inclytus Annæ
Ambas miscet aquas Calidæ gelidæque ministra
Tellus; sulphureisque effundit Pharmaca venis,
Hæc resoluta senum confirmat membra trementum,
El refovet nervos lotrix hæc lympa gelatos.
Huc infirma regunt baculis vestigia claudi;
Ingrati referunt baculis vestigia spretis.
Huc, mater fieri cupiens, accedit inanis,
Plenaque discedit, puto, nec veniente marito."

IN ENGLISH.

"This fountain sacred to Saint Anna's name,
A stream from thence both hot and cold does rise
In which a Pharmaceutic vertue lies.
It gives the aged Paralyte relieve,
And nourishes the nerves grown cold and stiff.
It doth the sick unto their health restore,
And makes the same to need the crutch no more:"

&c., &c.

"About a mile from Buxton is *Pool's Hole* so called from one
Pool an outlaw who fled and hid himself here. It opens at the
bottom of a mountain where severall women attend with

candles, and conduct you thro' a little door into a narrow passage which is so low that you are obliged to creep on all four, while you are squeezed to pieces by the stones which defend the contracted orifice. When you are entered about eight yards the hollow suffers you to rise, and view the beauty of the arched Roof above, which shines as if twas beset with Stars. But when we removed our Eyes downwards, and contemplated the Dangers before us, we had scarce Courage enough to Satisfy our curiosity in the Subterranean Scrutiny: the extensive Womb of the Cave was pregnant of prodigious uneven Rocks, which we were forced to climb: and notwithstanding all the care of our female guides the stones were so slippery and pointed that Death attended every step, to plunge us into a Black River, which runs with dreadful groanings just under us. In our way we were obliged to suspend our fears while we diverted ourselves with severall stones resembling men, Lions, dogs, Haycocks and Lanthorns, which owe their being to mere chance. In the Roof we saw a stone which they call the Flitch of Bacon, because tis somewhat like it in shape. This with the things mentioned before are caused by the Petrifying Quality of the place. For the water sliding down in drops changes its aqueous Substance and incrustates into stone.

“ Having taken leave of those Rarities we pursued our search thro' the rugged windings of the Cave, till at last on the left hand we saw a large pillar of an odd Configuration which taking Root on the solid below ascends and supports the starry Roof. The admirable contexture of this pillar is excellently described by Cotton in these words—

“ Before your eyes

You see a great transparent pillar rise
Of the same shining matter with ye rest,
But such a one as Nature does contest
(Tho' working in ye Dark) in this brave piece
With all the Obelisks of Ancient Greecc.
For all the art ye Chizel could apply
Ne'er wrought such curious folds of drapery
Of this the figure is, as men should croud
A vast colossus in a marble shroud :

And yet the pleats so soft and flowing are
As finest folds from finest looms they were.
But far as hands could reach to give a blow
By the rude Clowns broke and disfigured so
As may be well supposed when all that come
Carry some piece of the Rock Crystal home.
Of all these Rarities this alone can claim
A doubtless right to everlasting fame."

"This is called the Queen of Scots pillar; for when the Queen of Scots was in these parts she ventured her princely person thus far into the Cave, and saluting the Pillar called it hers; and since then it has retained that name. It was with some difficulty we prevailed with our Guides to a further search, the way being very dangerous. At last they yielded to lead us by arm down a steep and slippery Descent by the side of y^e pillar. When we came to the bottom we crossed a dangerous stream jumping from one stone to another, till we came to the foot of the most affrighting Rocks that ever we beheld. Our next attempt was to storm this place, which we did by laying hold on the rugged part of the solid with our Hands, while our Guides supported us behind. After we had ascended about one hundred yards our heads almost touched the Roof, and looking down we saw a candle left at the stream below which looked like a distant star. The Grotto admitting us no farther we began to think of the upper world again; so turning about to go down we were amazed to see the horrid Descent. Nothing but Despair seised us while we mov'd downwards for you are supported on either side by our conductors while some others slide down before you, against whom you place your feet, so that if any of you slip, you are unavoidably dash'd to peices. In this manner we proceeded till we came again to the pillar. And from thence, after we had seen Mr. Pool's apartments, we were conducted thro' the narrow passage again to the door we entered in at, which being opened we took leave of the Dark Abyss, and mounting our horses continued our journey."