

## Paintings in a Cave

In France, there are some very famous caves. No one knew they were there for many hundreds of years. The entrance hole was hidden.

A boy from the nearby village was out walking with his dog. Some years earlier a great storm had torn up a fir-tree. The dog began to sniff round its roots. Suddenly the dog disappeared. The boy ran over to the tree. He found a deep hole, but he could not see the dog. He could not hear him barking.

The hole was big. The boy carefully got down into it. His feet found a slippery floor leading down into the dark. He called his dog. The dog barked back. The boy lit a match and began to move down just a little. He seemed to be in a big space underground. He lit another match. And then another. But soon he had no matches left. By the light of his last match he climbed back out again.

What had he found? There were tales of hidden treasure going around in his village. Quickly he found his friends. "We must go down!" they said. "Perhaps there is treasure in the cave!"

They got some more matches and in they went. Slowly they felt their way down. They came to a low gallery. They remembered about some caves not far away. In these caves there were paintings and carvings. "Maybe we will find such things," thought the boys. What a secret they had between them! "Tomorrow we will meet up," they said. "We will get some ropes and a lamp."

Down they went again the next day. They came to a great oval room. What they saw in the lamp light made them gasp. The walls were covered with paintings of bulls, horses and deer. No one had seen them for hundreds and hundreds of years.

There were other long rooms that led off this room. The walls also had paintings in red, brown, yellow and black. At first the boys kept their secret. "Come and see!" They told their friends. "Pay us a little money and we will take you. Don't tell anyone! It is a secret." But they knew that they should not really keep the secret to themselves. At last they went to their teacher. "Come and see what we have found!" they told him.

The teacher was amazed. He send word at once to cave experts. Soon, from all over the France, the experts came. "This cave is the best piece of early art we have ever seen," they said.



The paintings were good; very good. The artists who painted them lived long, long ago. But they were skilled artists. They were just as skilled as artists today. People have not evolved to be better artists. They have been good artists from the very beginning. The famous French painter Picasso went to see the caves. He thought the paintings were very good. "We modern painters are no better," he said.