

In general, however, the efflux of water at these inferior openings is surprisingly uniform. It seems, therefore, that the large caverns in the interior must serve as reservoirs, and that the water escapes gradually from them, in consequence of the smallness of the rents and passages by which they communicate with the surface.

The phenomena above described are not confined to the Morea, but occur in Greece generally, and in those parts of Italy, Spain, Asia Minor, and Syria, where the formations of the Morea extend. The Copaic lake in Bœotia has no outlet, except by underground channels; and hence we can explain those traditional and historical accounts of its having gained on the surrounding plains and overflowed towns, as such floods must have happened whenever the outlet was partially choked up by mud, gravel, or the subsidence of rocks, caused by earthquakes. When speaking of the numerous fissures in the limestone of Greece, M. Boblaye reminds us of the famous earthquake of 469 B. C., when, as we learn from Cicero, Plutarch, Strabo, and Pliny, Sparta was laid in ruins, part of the summit of Mount Taygetus torn off, and numerous gulphs and fissures caused in the rocks of Laconia.

During the great earthquake of 1693, in Sicily, several thousand people were at once entombed in the ruins of caverns in limestone, at Sortino Vecchio; and, at the same time, a large stream, which had issued for ages from one of the grottos below that town, changed suddenly its subterranean course, and came out from the mouth of a cave lower down the valley, where no water had previously flowed. To this new point the ancient water mills were transferred.*

When the courses of engulphed rivers are thus liable to change, from time to time, by alterations in the levels of a country, and by the rending and shattering of mountain masses, we must suppose that the dens of wild beasts will sometimes be inundated by subterranean floods, and their carcasses buried under heaps of alluvium. The bones, moreover, of individuals which have died in the recesses of caves, or of animals which have been carried in for prey, may be drifted along, and mixed up with mud, sand, and fragments of rocks, so as to form osseous breccias.

In 1833 I had an opportunity of examining the celebrated caves of Franconia, and among others that of Rabenstein, newly discovered. Their general form, and the nature and arrangement of their contents, appeared to me to agree perfectly with the notion of their having once served as the channels of subterranean rivers. This mode of accounting for the introduction of transported matter into the Franconian and other caves, filled up as they often are even to their roofs with osseous breccia, was long ago proposed by M. C. Prevost†, and seems at length to be very generally adopted. But I do not doubt that bears inhabited some of the German caves, or that the cavern of Kirkdale, in Yorkshire, was once the den of hyænas.

* I learnt this from some inhabitants of Sortino, in 1829, and visited the points alluded to.

† Mém. de la Soc. d'Hist. Nat. de Paris, tom. iv.