

ated at the base of the Glacier des Bois. The source of the Rhone, as we have described in a preceding chapter, is at the base of an Alpine glacier.

Subterranean water-courses which glide between two impermeable strata may be brought to the surface by means of deep narrow orifices excavated in the soil ; a work, at times, of extreme difficulty. The famous *Artesian Well* is so named from the province of Artois, in France, where it has been in use from time immemorial. The ascending force of water in a well of this description increases in proportion to the elevation of the reservoir: their abundance in certain countries is a proof of the existence of veritable subterranean rivers.

Soils consisting of strata alternately porous and impermeable are those in which the well-digger's chances of success are greatest. Often in these deep beds numerous sheets of water exist at different levels, and are endowed—so to speak—with very unequal ascending powers.

The empirical art of discovering springs gave rise to the strange practices of the *diviners*, who were much in favour with the vulgar up to the very close of the last century.

[Divination by the rod or wand is an imposition of the highest antiquity. Hosea reproaches the Jews for believing in it:—"My people ask counsel at their stocks, and *their staff* declareth unto them" (iv. 12). It was a custom in vogue among the Chaldeans, among almost every nation with any pretence to scientific knowledge, and also among the wilder, ruder races, as the Alani and the ancient Germans.

In our own country it prevailed from a very early period. Dr. Henry states that after the Saxons and Danes had embraced Christianity, the priests were commanded by their ecclesiastical superiors to preach very frequently against *diviners*, sorcerers, augurers, and "all the filth of the wicked and the dotages of the Gentiles."*

It was still in repute in the day of the Commonwealth. The

* [Henry, "History of Great Britain," ii. 550.]