

Ossiferous caverns are likewise found at Hutton, Wirksworth, Clifton, Oreston, and Paviland. In the latter locality, a very lofty rock, which faces the sea on the Glamorganshire coast, presents two apertures, sometimes washed by the waves in stormy weather.]

The caverns we have been speaking of interest the geologist on account of their considerable deposit of fossil bones, and the difficulty he experiences in attempting to explain the accumulation of such widely-different remains in one and the same place. But there are many which possess no memorial of the antediluvian world, no relic of pre-historic ages, and yet are endowed with high attractions for the geographer, the artist, or the tourist. Some of these, the most famous and the most widely known, we shall now pass rapidly in review ; confining ourselves to a picturesque sketch of the underground regions which it is the lot of few men to explore.

[Among the greatest caverns may be named that of Guacharo, situated in the valley of Caripe, in Columbia.* It is approached by a vault of 78 feet in height and 60 in breadth. When Humboldt visited it, he entered by a vault 80 feet in height and 88 feet in width. The precipitous rock which overhangs it is mantled with a luxurious vegetation, composed of gigantic trees, flowering bushes, and lianas which droop from the vault in garlands and festoons, incessantly stirred to and fro by the currents of air. Following, for some forty yards, the bed of an ample brook which issues from the grotto, M. Humboldt found it bordered with large-leaved bananas, which attained the stature of twenty feet. Up to a distance of 450 feet from the mouth, the daylight penetrated so effectively that torches were unnecessary, for the grotto preserves the same direction to a very considerable extent. Proceeding further, our traveller heard the shrill cries of the night-birds, called *Guacharos*, which make their dwelling-places in this obscure retreat. They build their nests in the innumerable crevasses of the rock, at a height of about 65 feet from the ground. Their harsh strains, reverberated by the sides and roof of the cavern, create an indescribable clamour.

For about five hundred yards from the entrance, the grotto preserves the same dimensions. The fantastic shadows of the stalactites is projected in black on the luminous ground of a beautiful hill, which the sun illuminates with its rays, and which rises opposite the cavern's mouth. The traveller has then to drag himself up an abrupt ascent, over whose rocky ledges the brook falls in a shimmering cascade. From this point, the height of the roof diminishes to about 45 feet, and the soil is covered with a black mould, nourishing only a few stunted herbs. In proportion as the corridor grows narrower, the cries of the birds become more deafening ; and their uproar made so great an impression on the timid natures of Humboldt's Indian

* [Humboldt, "Personal Narrative of Travels in Equatorial America," &c.]