

pour down the declivities of the valleys and are absorbed in the fissures of the glaciers, eat into it from below, and sometimes hollow out considerable cavities, in which continual currents of air are produced through the difference of temperature between the atmosphere without and the air within the excavations.

Thus, underneath the glacier, gusts of air are created of a temperature of from 43° to 45° F.; this air plays on the lower sides, and powerfully assists in enlarging the caverns and conduits originally formed by the water alone. M. de Schlagintweit contrived to penetrate under a vault in the glacier of Marcel for upwards of 250 yards. Hugi has explored a hollow nearly one league square under the glaciers of Uraz, at the foot of the Titlis, and has shown that these immense arched roofs are supported on the ground by rows of massive pillars. An analogous phenomenon had previously been observed by Altmann in 1751 beneath the glacier of the Grindelwald.

The caverns existing beneath a glacier generally open at the foot of the terminal declivity. Sometimes the mouth is of considerable area, and the light playing upon its walls of ice produces in the interior the most magical effects. Shades of rose and azure, the glitter of innumerable prisms, the play of countless rainbows, convert these ice-caves into a spectacle of the most beautiful and fantastic character, which seems to realize the brightest dreams of Faeryland ever conceived by impassioned poet.

“ It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice ! ”

In Figure 109 we represent the ice-grotto situated under the *Glacier des Bois* of Mont Blanc, and forming the source of the Arveiron.\* Its height varies greatly at different seasons; so great a change as from 100 feet to 30 feet having been remarked. It is not always safe to enter the interior, from the blocks of ice which are constantly falling. In 1797 three persons were crushed to death. But it is a

\* [The river originally flowed from the cavern, but has recently made its exit from the side of the glacier at a point some way higher up, where it forms a waterfall conspicuous from Chamounix.]