

the granitic mountains are usually of a lofty elevation, their snowy summits give birth to copious springs, which speedily swell into great rivers. The Rhone, the Po, the Rhine, the Danube, have their origin in the High Alps. In the limestone mountains, consisting of soft, friable rocks, horizontally stratified, the water easily penetrates through the vertical chinks, and collects in subterranean reservoirs, or caverns, which are found in great numbers in the limestone formations. It is for this reason that springs are sometimes of so ample a volume, and immediately expand into powerful water-courses. Fed by a myriad tiny tributaries, they widen and deepen into rivers as soon as they emerge from their hiding-places. Such is the case, in the Jura, with the Loire, which no sooner issues into daylight than it is employed as the motive-power of several mills; such, too, is the case with the Fountain of Vaucluse, near Avignon, the Fountain of Nîmes, and a great number of other springs in France.

Immortalized by the loves of Petrarch and Laura, the fountain of Vaucluse rises at a distance of five leagues from Avignon, and about one thousand yards from the village of Vaucluse. Above the village he will catch sight of some ruins, which are absurdly named the *Château of Petrarch*. He then enters into a narrow valley, bordered by steep rocks, which abut on a precipitous wall, terminating the valley abruptly like a *cul de sac*; hence its name of Vaucluse (*vallis clausa*). The spring rises at the foot of this wall. A score of torrents leap forth and sparkle, dashing headlong in noisy rage, and forming the river Sorgue. Below the wall that shuts in the valley lies a circular basin about seventy feet in diameter, surrounded by enormous rocky masses, and hollowed out in the fashion of a funnel, within which the waters are maintained at varying levels. The bottom of this abyss has never been discovered. Its excavation extends far under the rocks, and vast subterranean channels conduct to it the supplies resulting from the liquefaction of the snows. The blocks piled up in front of the basin are covered with a blackish-green moss, which grows on a white powdery limestone earth deposited by the waters.

On the border of the basin was erected, in 1809, a column with this inscription:—"To Petrarch." Though modelled in imitation of the Column of Trajan at Rome, it appeared so paltry in effect when compared with the grandeur of the surrounding scenery, and was so dwarfed by the elevation of the immense rocks heaped up in the neighbourhood, that it was found necessary to remove it. Accordingly, it was transported to the entrance of the village, where it is still standing.

Who will not remember that it was in this delightful seclusion the immortal Petrarch sought the consolations of solitude and meditation?

"In quest," he says, in his "Epistle to Posterity," "of a retreat which should serve me as an asylum, I found, about fifteen miles from Avignon, a very narrow but solitary