

village, he passes through Rochefort. Before venturing into the profound recesses of the subterranean grotto, where a thousand marvellous spectacles await him, he contemplates the gulf into which the waters of the Lesse dash with foam, and fury, and a roar of contending sounds. It descends into this part of the grotto in a series of cascades, to reappear at some distance in the interior.

Our space forbids our giving a detailed description of the numerous natural curiosities which meet the visitor's eye at every step, during his three or four hours' exploration of the interior of this remarkable grotto.

Let us content ourselves with the general observation that he traverses a series of spacious halls of different elevations, decorated, as is the case in all similar caverns, with stalactites, which sparkle bravely in the torch-light, and broken up by precipices which threaten the unwary with a thousand dangers.

The names of these different chambers are fantastic, or significant : such as the Hall of Beetles, the Foxes' Hall, Frogs' Hall, so called from the animals which formerly frequented these retreats ; the Gallery and Hall of the Precipice, the Unrivalled, the Hall of the Mamelon, the Trophies, the Alhambra, the Mysterious, the Place of Arms, the Portico, and the Hall of the Dome.

The concluding part of the journey is performed in a boat, whose oarsman gently propels it with his sculls, while the visitor surrenders himself for a few moments to the emotions which agitate his soul. The guides toss to and fro their resinous torches ; they kindle wisps of straw, and the mingled flames reveal a semi-ogive roof, semi-horizontal, formed, as it were, by two huge blocks of stone throughout its entire length, and embellished with a profusion of glittering stalactites.

Slowly, slowly does the little skiff drop down the murmuring stream. The deep intense silence which prevails in this mysterious *under-earth* is only interrupted by the shrill cry of the bats, by the monotonous babble of drops of water which, falling from the roof, drip, drip into the river, and by the incessant bounds and somersaults of the fish attracted to the surface of the water by the wavering light.

It is thus the traveller reaches the entrance of the grotto. But before revisiting the glimpses of the day, he enjoys the pleasure of listening to the marvellous echo which repeats itself *ad infinitum* in the sides of the cavern.

“ The report of a gun,” says Dr. Alleweireldt, who visited the cavern in 1830, “ fired at the place where the waters quit the cavern, resembles that of a field-piece ! Immediately after the first discharge, a second follows, then a third, a fourth, the echoes reverberating for from twelve to eighteen seconds. At each repetition, the sound appears to recede, and the latter is apparently audible at a few leagues distant, when it appears to die away in the bosom of the earth. The combined noises are not unlike a very loud and prolonged peal of thunder. Any unprepared visitor would think the thunder was breaking and clashing on every side of him. The rock seems to split ; in all directions are repeated the crackling, the explosion, the detonation, the roar ; peal upon peal is reproduced ; the earth is apparently shaken to its foundations ; the vaults of the immense cavern yawn, as it were, and rend themselves apart. To all this frightful hurly-burly succeeds tranquillity and a profound silence.”