

lit up by the glare of torches, innumerable crystals catch and reflect the wavering gleams, until the eye of the spectator is dazzled by the extraordinary magnificence of the picture.

Produced by the extreme cold of a very severe winter, the ice in these caverns, when once formed, is prevented from melting by the imperfect manner in which the air acts as a conductor of caloric.

From certain caverns, and even from simple fissures, currents of

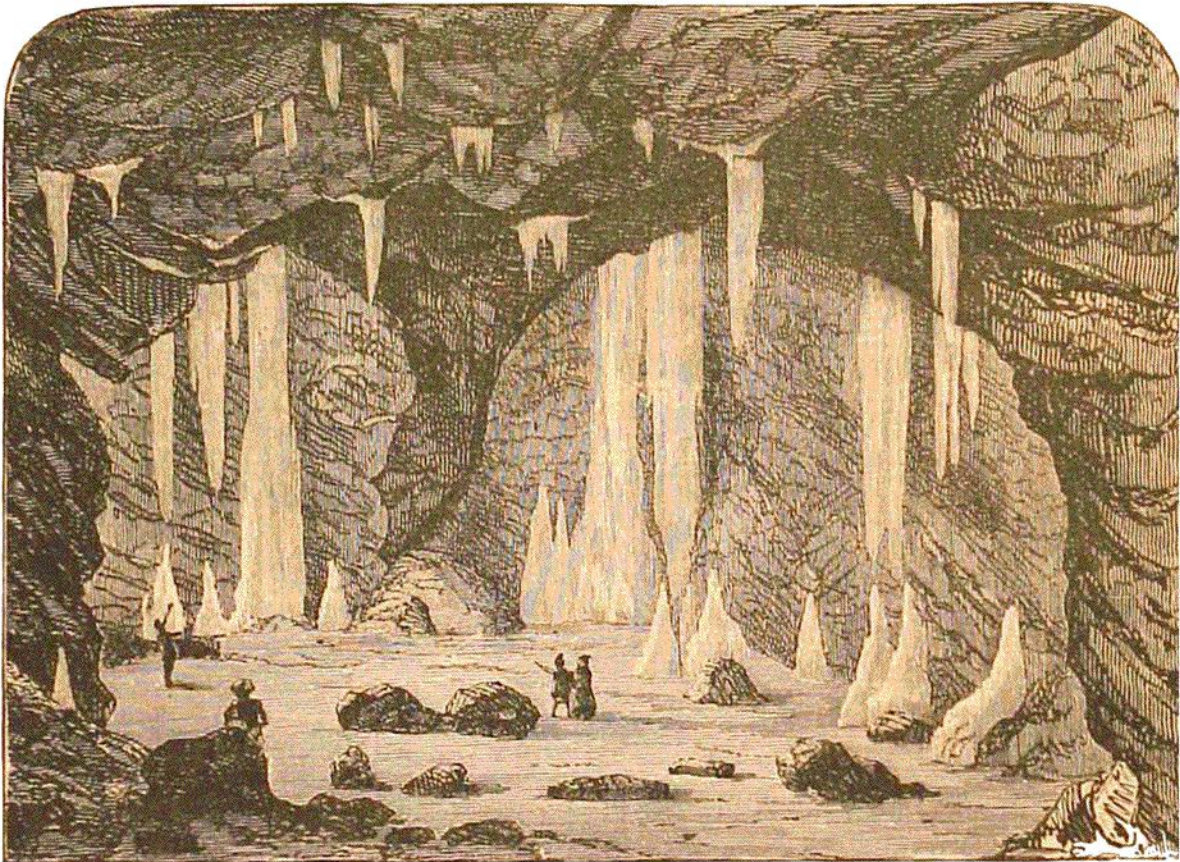


FIG. 176.—ICE CAVERNS OF MONT VERGÉ.

cold air are known to escape ; a phenomenon which has much engaged the attention of the scientific. Saussure refers to the cold-air caverns of the Monte Testaccio at Rome ; of the island of Ischia ; of Saint Marino, Cesi, Chiavenna, Caprino, Mendrisio, and Hergisweil. They are also found in Catalogne, at the foot of the Batet volcano, where they are popularly called *bufadors*, and are regarded as a positive benefit.

In winter, the current grows enfeebled, and ceases completely, or even changes into a breath of warm air. The caves of the village of