

mined to a great depth by the ancient monks, who were the metallurgists of their age. But for the artist the important Orgonian beds possess a special interest; their admirable vertical fractures, their erect perpendicular peaks, each surpassing the other in boldness, form his finest studies. In the Var, the defiles of Vésubia, of the Esteron, and Tinéa, are jammed up between walls of peaks, for many hundreds of yards, between which there is scarcely room for a narrow road by the side of the roaring torrent. "In the Drôme," says Fournet, "the entrance to the beautiful valley of the Vercors is closed during a part of the year, because, in order to enter, it is necessary to cross the two gullies, the *Great* and *Little Goulet*, through which the waters escape from the valley. Even during the dry season, he who would enter the gorge must take a foot-bath.

"This state of things could not last; and in 1848 it was curious to see miners suspended on the sides of one of these lateral precipices, some 450 feet above the torrent, and about an equal distance below the summit of the Chalk. There they began to excavate cavities or niches in the face of the rock, all placed on the same level, and successively enlarged. These were united together in such a manner as to form a road practicable for carriages; now through a gallery, now covered by a corbelling, to look over which affords a succession of surprises to the traveller.

"This is not all," adds M. Fournet: "he who traverses the high plateaux of the country finds at every step deep diggings in the soil, designated pits or *scialets*, the oldest of which have their sides clothed with a curious vegetation, in which the *Aucolin* predominates; shelter is found in these pits from the cutting winds which rage so furiously in these elevated regions. Others form a kind of cavern, in which a temperature obtains sufficient to freeze water even in the middle of summer. These cavities form natural *glaciers*, which we again find upon some of the table-lands of the Jura.

"The cracks and crevasses of the limestone receive the waters produced by falling rain and melted snow; true to the laws of all fluid bodies, they filter through the rocks until they reach the lower and impervious marly beds, where they form sheets of water, which in course of time find some outlet through which they discharge themselves. In this manner subterranean galleries, sometimes of great extent, are formed, in which are assembled all the marvels which crumbling stalactites, stalagmites, placid lakes, and headlong torrents can produce; finally, these waters, forcing their way through the external orifices, give rise to those fine cascades which, with the first gushing torrent, form an actual river."