

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed December 24, 1931

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A FRENCH ICE CAVE

Guidebooks are not strong in accounts of natural wonders, and there is no mention in Baedeker's "Northern France" of one of Europe's most celebrated ice caves, published descriptions of which run back to the 16th century. It is called Chaux-les-Passavant, and is near the city of Besancon. This is one of several European ice caves visited and described some years ago by E. S. Balch, who says of its condition in the middle of August:

"The bottom of the cave was entirely covered with a flooring of ice. How thick this flooring was there was no means of judging, as there were no holes, but it must have been at least two or three meters thick in places. At the back of the cavern, directly facing the entrance, one magnificent frozen waterfall streamed from a fissure. It was perhaps five meters high.

"Perhaps the most remarkable feature of all was six or seven great stalagmites, shaped like cones or rough pyramids, which rose on the floor of the cave. One of these was at least five meters in diameter and six in height, and seemed perfectly solid. In the case of two of the others, however, the cones were broken on one side, revealing in each the stem and branches of a young pine tree. These evidently had been planted in the ice and round them the columns had grown. Whether all the ice cones were thus artificial in their origin I could not determine."

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