

in our planet, and still bursting forth, in many places, with destructive energy, had, in times long past, exerted agencies still more extensive—covering provinces with ruins, and operating, even in the bed of the primeval oceans. The speculation seemed to claim quite as much affinity with poetical, as with philosophical conceptions, and it was not till the middle of the last century, that the subject of extinct volcanos began to be investigated with accuracy and skill.

It will be sufficient to name the much disputed country of Auvergne, Velay, and Viverrais, in France, which has been often visited and examined by able geologists, and we believe, that within a few years past, no one of them has left that region, without being convinced that it is of volcanic origin. This district lies upon the river Rhone, nearly in the angle formed by it with the Mediterranean, and covers a square area of forty or fifty leagues in diameter.

Craters, regularly formed, often entire, sometimes with the thin and scorified edge of the lip in fine preservation, and occasionally of vast dimensions; here, black, rugged and scathed with fire—there, overgrown with trees, and there, filled with water, forming lakes; currents of lava, lying where they flowed from the crater, or where they burst from the side or foot of the ruptured mountain, extending many miles, and many leagues, traceable directly to their source, winding along the gorges and the sinuosities of the vallies, now and then diverted from their course by rocks, hills, and other obstacles; sometimes damming up rivers, whose beds they have crossed or obstructed, and thus forming lakes of considerable dimensions; exhibiting all the varieties of lithoid lava, from that which is compact and rock-like, to that which, in an incipient, or in a prevailing degree, is porous and vesicular; crowned or mixed with slag, scorix, pumice, olivine, and other exuvix of known and active volcanos; displaying frequently a structure, now spherical, ovoidal and concentric; now prismatic and columnar, and fronting streams, and bounding valleys, with ranges of columns, equalling or rivalling the regularity of the famous colonnades of Fingal's Cave and the Giant's Causeway; these are a few of the most striking features of these countries, which are so affluent in proofs of igneous origin, that there is nothing needed, but to select, carefully and judiciously, those facts which will be the most decisive, especially with respect to minds not familiar with such contemplations.

The volcanos of the Auvergne, &c. are regarded as of different ages; some appear to have been active before the formation of the present valleys, and some since; where the currents of lava have