

Geneva before its pure waters are again filled with sand and sediment by the impetuous Arve, descending from the highest Alps, and bearing along in its current the granitic detritus annually brought down by the glaciers of Mont Blanc. The Rhone afterwards receives vast contributions of transported matter from the Alps of Dauphiny, and the primary and volcanic mountains of Central France; and when at length it enters the Mediterranean, it discolours the blue waters of that sea with a whitish sediment, for the distance of between six and seven miles, throughout which space the current of fresh water is perceptible.

Strabo's description of the delta is so inapplicable to its present configuration, as to attest a complete alteration in the physical features of the country since the Augustan age. It appears, however, that the head of the delta, or the point at which it begins to ramify, has remained unaltered since the time of Pliny, for he states that the Rhone divided itself at Arles into two arms. This is the case at present; one of the branches, the western, being now called Le Petit Rhône, which is again subdivided before entering the Mediterranean. The advance of the base of the delta, in the last eighteen centuries, is demonstrated by many curious antiquarian monuments. The most striking of these is the great and unnatural *détour* of the old Roman road from Ugernum to Beziers (*Bætterræ*) which went round by Nismes (*Nemausus*). It is clear that, when this was first constructed, it was impossible to pass in a direct line, as now, across the delta, and that either the sea or marshes intervened in a tract now consisting of terra firma.* Astruc also remarks, that all the places on low lands, lying to the north of the old Roman road between Nismes and Beziers, have names of Celtic origin, evidently given to them by the first inhabitants of the country; whereas, the places lying south of that road, towards the sea, have names of Latin derivation, and were clearly founded after the Roman language had been introduced.

Another proof, also, of the great extent of land which has come into existence since the Romans conquered and colonized Gaul, is derived from the fact, that the Roman writers never mention the thermal waters of Balaruc in the delta, although they were well acquainted with those of Aix, and others still more distant, and attached great importance to them, as they invariably did to all hot springs. The waters of Balaruc, therefore, must have formerly issued under the sea—a common phenomenon on the borders of the Mediterranean; and on the advance of the delta they continued to flow out through the new deposits.

Among the more direct proofs of the increase of land, we find that Mese, described under the appellation of Mesua Collis by Pomponius Mela†, and stated by him to be nearly an island, is now far inland. Notre Dame des Ports, also, was a harbour in 898, but is now a league from the shore. Psalmodi was an island in 815, and is now

* *Mém. d'Astruc*, cited by Von Hoff, vol. i. p. 288.

† *Lib. ii. c. v.*