

the pavements of the streets, which were formed of short joints of basaltic columns, placed perpendicularly in the ground; and upon inquiry they found, that the stones were brought from the neighbouring mountains of the Vivarais. This information induced them to survey the country; and upon arriving at Clermont, a town with about 30,000 inhabitants, the capital of Auvergne, they were satisfied that the whole region was of volcanic origin; for in the vicinity of the town they discovered currents of lava, black and rugged as those of Italy, descending uninterruptedly from some conical hills of scoriæ, which still preserved the form of craters. "To those who now visit central France, and see on all sides the most unequivocal marks of volcanic agency—the numerous hills formed entirely of loose cinders, and porous and diversified as if just thrown from a furnace, surrounded by plains of black rugged lava, on which even the lichen almost refuses to vegetate,—it appears scarcely credible, that previous to the last half century, no one had thought of attributing these marks of desolation to the only powers in nature capable of producing them. This, however, is perfectly natural, and not without examples. The inhabitants of Herculaneum and Pompeii built their houses with the lava of Vesuvius, ploughed up its scoriæ and ashes, and ascended its crater, without dreaming of their neighbourhood to a volcano which was to give the first proof of its energies by burying them beneath