

the imbedding of the bones of mammalia, birds, and reptiles—the accumulation of lignite and other vegetable matter—are data from which we may restore the ancient country of Central France.

It was a region encircled by a chain of granite mountains, watered by numerous streams and rivulets, and possessing lakes of vast extent. Its soil was covered with luxuriant vegetation, and peopled by palæotheria, anoplotheria, and other terrestrial mammalia; the crocodile and turtle found shelter in its marshes and rivers; aquatic birds frequented its fens, and sported over the surface of its lakes; while myriads of insects swarmed in the air, and passed through their wonderful metamorphoses in the waters. In a neighbouring region,* herds of ruminants and other herbivora, of species and genera now no more, with birds and reptiles, were the undisturbed occupants of a country abounding in palms and tree-ferns, and having rivers and lakes, with gulfs which teemed with the inhabitants of the sea; and to this district the fiery torrents of the volcano did not extend. But to return to Auvergne—a change came over the scene—violent eruptions burst forth from craters long silent—the whole country was laid desolate—its living population was swept away—all was one vast waste, and sterility succeeded to the former luxuriance of life and beauty. Ages rolled by—the mists of the mountains and the rains, produced new springs, torrents, and

* The Paris basin is about 220 miles from Auvergne.