

that separate the basins of the Allier and the Loire. Behind us, as we looked across the plain, lay the great granitic ridge or plateau, rising to a height of somewhere about 1600 feet above the plain, and nearly 3000 feet above the sea. Its base, up which we were slowly ascending, had a varied mantle of cornfields and vineyards; narrow, well-wooded valleys had been cut by streamlets down its flanks, but the higher slopes became barer by degrees as they approached the range of volcanic cones that crowns the summit of the ridge. It was with no slight interest that, among the little runnels and cart-tracks which were crossed in the ascent, we watched for indications of the nature of the rocks below. Sometimes a chalky lacustrine marl was noticed; and, as we drew nearer to the granite, we found ourselves upon pebbly sandstone that had evidently been formed out of the waste of the granite hills. But how could the formation of such a deposit have been effected here? Foot by foot as we crept up the acclivity this sandstone accompanied us, until at last, at a height of probably not less than a thousand feet above the level of the plain, we reached the granite. The gravel and sand, out of which this sandstone had been made, must have been deposited in a lake—the old lake, in short, which once occupied the site of the Limagne. The water must therefore have reached up as far as to the point to which we had traced the sandstone; and thus, in the course of an hour's ramble, we ascertained for ourselves the somewhat startling fact, that unless later subterranean movements had altered the relative levels, the fertile plain below was formerly covered by a lake at least a thousand feet deep. Once on the granite we were free from the entanglements of enclosures and fences. As this rock crumbles away with rapidity, its surface is smooth, without those rugged features which