

taken a huge spadeful out of the summit of each hill. The reason of this structure may be guessed, but it becomes strikingly apparent on a closer inspection of the ground. Each cone, with four or five exceptions, is found on examination to be an actual volcano, extinct indeed, but still well-nigh as fresh as if the internal fires had burnt out only yesterday. The truncated, hollowed summit thus turns out to be a true crater—the vent, in short, whence the materials of the hill were erupted. Upwards of fifty such volcanoes dot the ridge to the north and south of the Puy de Dôme, each formed from an independent orifice, and sometimes containing, as in the Puy de Montchié, no fewer than four separate craters in one hill. They consist of loose ashes, dust, and scorixæ, still so lightly aggregated that, where the rain has bared off long strips of the grassy covering, one may slide rapidly ankle-deep in *débris* from the top of a cone to its base. Many of the cones have had one of their sides removed, and from the broken part a current of basaltic lava has issued, flowing out over the tableland, sometimes for several miles, and even descending the valleys that slope into the Limagne. The main mass of lava, in many different streams, has gone down the western side of the chain towards the valley of the Sioule, and hence the strange, sombre, arid aspect of that tract. From the summit of the Puy de Dôme you can trace some of the lava-streams, marking whence they issued and how they flowed across the country. That of the Villar valley, already described, is especially noticeable, breaking from the Puy de Pariou, and descending towards the east in a black rugged current, like a river of frozen icebergs.

Such, then, is the general landscape that stretches around the great Puy de Dôme. It is eminently dreary and desolate in the nearer parts, while in the eastern dis-