

the credit of the first discovery, denied to him in his lifetime and after it, must in common fairness be assigned to him.

Central France was the region that furnished Guettard with his proofs of extinct volcanoes. It was the same region that afterwards supplied fuel to the controversy over the origin of basalt which raged with fury for so many years, and it was from this region also that the proofs were obtained which more than any others brought that controversy to an end. The story of this old battle is full of interest and instruction. We learn from it how the advance of truth may be impeded by personal authority; how, under guise of the most rigorous induction from fact, the most perverse theories may be supported; how, under the influence of theoretical preconceptions, the obvious meaning and relations of phenomena may be lost sight of, and how, even in the realm of science, dry questions of interpretation may become the source of cruel misrepresentation and personal animosity.

To understand the history of this controversy, we must trace the career of another illustrious Frenchman who, with less opportunity for scientific work than Guettard, less ample qualifications in all departments of natural science, and less promptitude in putting the results of his observations into tangible form, has nevertheless gained for himself an honoured place among the founders of modern geology.

Nicholas Desmarest (1725-1815) was born in humble circumstances at Soulaines, a little town in France between Bar-sur-Aube and Brienne, on 16th September