

scientific life to which he eventually devoted himself. Botany was his first love, and after a long and fruitful devotion to other parts of the domain of science, it was to plants that he turned again at last in the closing years of his life. Amidst his laborious campaigns in the Alps, the plants of the mountains never lost their charm for him. Among the highest crests, surrounded by all that is most impressive in Nature, and occupied with the profoundest problems in the history of the globe, he would carefully gather the smallest flower and mark it with pleasure in his notebook.<sup>1</sup>

De Saussure's attitude towards his native mountains may be inferred from a few of the sentences with which he prefaces his immortal work. "It is the study of mountains which above all else can quicken the progress of the theory of the earth or geology. The plains are uniform, and allow the rocks to be seen only where these have been excavated by running water or by man. The high mountains, on the other hand, infinitely varied in their composition as in their forms, present gigantic natural sections wherein the order, the position, the direction, the thickness and the nature of the different formations of which they are composed, as well as the fissures which traverse them, can be seen with the greatest clearness and at one view. Nevertheless, to no purpose are these facilities of observation offered, if those who propose to study the question do not know how to consider these grand objects as a whole and in their widest relations. The sole object of most

<sup>1</sup> Cuvier, "Éloge de Saussure," *Éloges*, vol. i. p. 411.