

Von Buch's earlier writings were conceived after the strictest rules of his master's system. In his first separate work, a mineralogical description of Landeck, he proclaimed, among other orthodox tenets of the Freiberg school, his adherence to the aqueous origin of basalt, collected all the instances he could find of organic remains in that rock, and boldly affirmed that "it cannot be denied that Neptunism opens up to the spirit of observation a far wider field than does the volcanic theory."<sup>1</sup>

In the year 1797 Von Buch had his first view of the Alps, and in the following year began his more distant journeys, passing into Austria, and thence into Italy, where he spent a considerable time among the volcanic districts. In 1802 he published the first of two volumes descriptive of these early travels. It was appropriately dedicated to Werner, and expressed his continued adherence to the Wernerian faith. "Every country and every district," he remarks, "where basalt is found furnishes evidence directly opposed to all idea that this remarkable rock has been erupted in a molten condition, or still more that each basalt hill marks the site of a volcano."<sup>2</sup> Before the second volume appeared, the writer of that sentence had an opportunity of visiting Auvergne. His conversion there appears to have been as rapid as that of

<sup>1</sup> *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. i. p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> *Geognostische Beobachtungen auf Reisen durch Deutschland und Italien*, Berlin, i. (1802), p. 126. It is a curious fact that A. von Humboldt also began his geological career among the basalts of Germany, and published in 1790 a little tract of 126 pages, entitled *Mineralogische Beobachtungen über einige Basalte am Rhein*.