

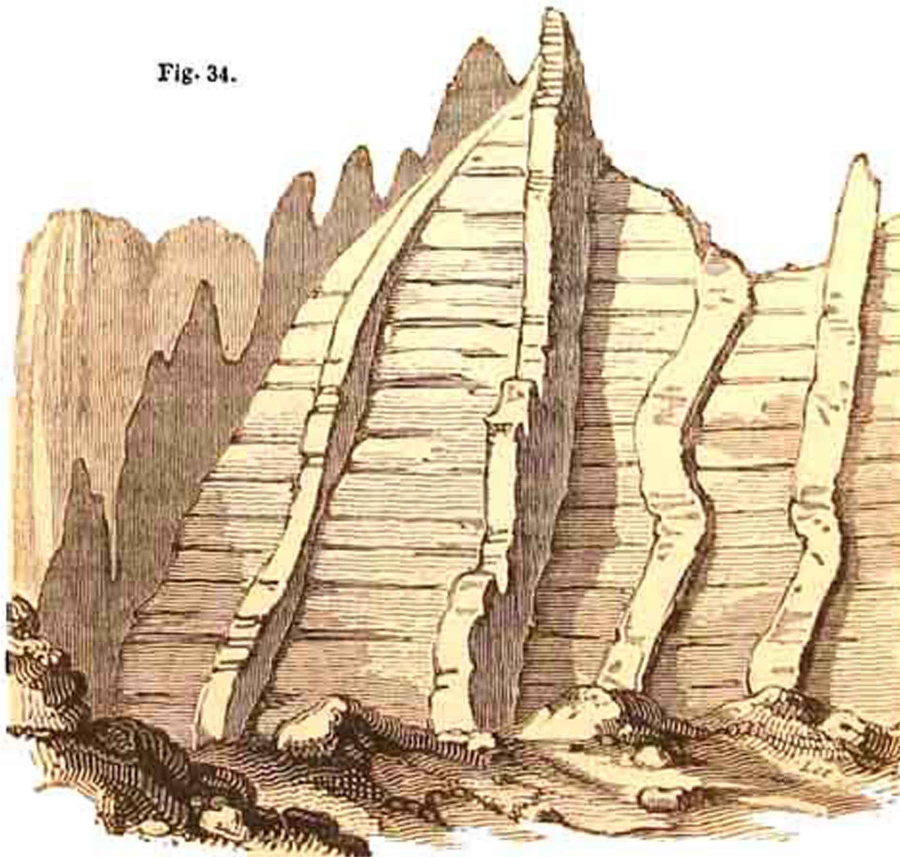
such is the dearth of springs, that the herdsman is compelled to supply his flocks, during the hot season, from stores of snow laid up in hollows of the mountain during winter.

The strips of green herbage and forest land, which have here and there escaped the burning lavas, serve, by contrast, to heighten the desolation of the scene. When I visited the valley, nine years after the eruption of 1819, I saw hundreds of trees, or rather the white skeletons of trees, on the borders of the black lava, the trunks and branches being all leafless, and deprived of their bark by the scorching heat emitted from the melted rock; an image recalling those beautiful lines:—

— “As when heaven’s fire
Hath scath’d the forest oaks, or mountain pines,
With singed top their stately growth, though bare,
Stands on the blasted heath.”

Form, composition, and origin of the dikes.— But without indulging the imagination any longer in descriptions of scenery, I may observe, that the dikes before mentioned form unquestionably the most interesting geological phenomenon in the Val del Bove. Some of these are composed of trachyte, others of compact blue basalt with olivine. They vary in breadth from two to twenty feet and upwards, and usually project from the face of the cliffs, as represented in the annexed drawing (fig. 34.). They consist of harder materials than

Fig. 34.



Dikes at the base of the Serre del Solfizio, Etna.

the strata which they traverse, and therefore waste away less rapidly under the influence of that repeated congelation and thawing to