

volcanic mounds, sometimes capped with little towns, so that, although we had quitted the district of great lava-streams, we were far from having reached the limits of the volcanic district. The town of Brioude lies at the southern extremity of that great lacustrine deposit of the valley of the Allier, so conspicuously displayed in the Limagne d'Auvergne. The granitic hills close in upon the river, and thence swell southward into the mountains of La Margeride and the uplands of the Haute-Loire. Of Brioude itself I have a pleasant recollection as a quaint rambling town with some large decayed houses that seem to have once been tenanted by a better class of inmates. The hotel at which we stayed was one of these. From a retired street we entered a low archway, and found ourselves in a dark room with a large fireplace, now used as a kitchen. A number of doors opened out of the farther side of the room, and through one of them we were ushered into a lobby with broad staircase and carved banisters. Up and down, through one passage into another, we at last halted at a recess on one of the landings, and were shown into a large wainscoted bedroom. Its tarnished mirrors, faded green-velvet chairs, old-fashioned cabinets and tables, were certainly not the kind of furniture one would have expected to see in a quiet hotel in a remote little town. There was a taste and harmony about the whole, and they fitted so well with the character of the rest of the house, as to suggest that the place had been the residence of some decayed family, and that not many years could have elapsed since it passed into the hands of an innkeeper.

Crossing the Allier by the fine bridge at Old Brioude, and bidding adieu to that noble river, we started for Le Puy. Our course lay towards the south-east, up a range of granitic heights, traversed by numerous narrow and