

CHAPTER IV

THE rise of Geology in France. Palissy. The labours of Guettard.

WHILE in England, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany the study of fossils was making progress in spite of the controversies to which the subject gave rise, in France for a time less advance could be perceived. It is true that as far back as 1580 the celebrated ceramic artist Bernard Palissy had published some important observations on the petrification of wood, as well as on shells and fishes in the rocks, and had called attention to these objects in proof of the former presence of the sea or of lakes, where such organic remains are now found. But it was not until the early part of the eighteenth century that France produced a man worthy to stand in the front rank of the early founders of geology and of whose career some detailed notice may here be given. While Buffon was indulging in his brilliant speculations as to the origin and history of the earth there lived in Paris at the same time a student of Nature, belonging to a totally different type, who, shunning any approach to theory, dedicated himself with the enthusiasm of a true naturalist to the patient observation and accumulation of facts regarding the rocks of the earth's crust, and to whom