

On what is now known as Physiographical Geology, or the discussion of the existing topography of the land, this same illustrious Frenchman left the impress of his mind. I will cite only one of his contributions to this subject—a memoir “On the Degradation of Mountains effected in our Time by heavy Rains, Rivers and the Sea.”¹ This work, which occupies about 200 quarto pages, deals with the efficacy of moving water in altering the face of the land. At the very beginning of it, he starts with a reminiscence from the scenes of his infancy, and weaves it into the story he has to tell of the ceaseless degradation of the terrestrial surface. He remembers a picturesque crag of the Fontainebleau sandstone which, perched above the slopes of a little valley, had been worn by the weather into a rudely-formed female figure holding an infant, and had been named by the peasantry the Rock of the Good Virgin. That crag, under which he used to play with his schoolmates, had in the interval of less than half a century gradually crumbled away, and had been washed down to the foot of the declivity. In the same neighbourhood he had noticed at successive visits that prominent rocks had made their appearance which were not previously visible. They seemed, as it were, to start out of the ground, yet he knew that they arose simply from the removal of the material that once covered them. In like manner, ravines of some depth were in the course of a few years cut out of ground where there had before been no trace of them. In these

¹ See vol. iii. of his *Mémoires sur différentes parties des Sciences et des Arts*, pp. 209-403.