

## CHAPTER V

THE Foundation of Volcanic Geology. Desmarest.

THE leading position acquired by France in the investigation of the history of the earth, through the labours of such men as Descartes, Buffon and Guettard, was well maintained in the later decades of the eighteenth century. Geology indeed as a distinct science did not yet exist. The study of rocks and their contents was known as mineralogy, which as a pursuit, often of economic value, had been in vogue for centuries. The idea that beyond the mere variety of its mineral contents, the crust of the earth contained a record of the earth's evolution, for many ages before the advent of man, only very slowly took definite shape. Buffon partly realized it; Guettard had a fuller perception of its nature, though he failed to observe proofs of a long succession of changes earlier than the present condition of the surface.

One of the most valuable parts of Guettard's work was his recognition of the existence of volcanic rocks in regions far removed from any active volcano. We have seen that he was led to this important deduction by a train of observation and inference, and that although he never worked out the subject in detail,