renown that drew a yearly increasing number of travellers to these distant shores.[1]

Much had thus been learnt as to the diffusion of basalt in Europe, and many excellent drawings had been published of the remarkable prismatic structure of this rock. But no serious attempt seems to have been made to grapple with the problem of its origin. Some absurd notions had indeed been entertained on this subject. The long regular pillars of basalt, it was gravely suggested, were jointed bamboos of a former period, which had somehow been converted into stone. The similarity of the prisms to those of certain minerals led some mineralogists to regard basalt as a kind of schorl, which had taken its geometrical forms in the process of crystallization. Romé de Lisle is even said to have maintained that each basalt prism ought to have a pyramidal termination, like the schorls and other small crystals of the same nature.[2]

Guettard, as we have seen, drew a distinction between basalt and lava, and this opinion was general in his time. The basalts of Central and Western Europe were usually found on hill tops, and displayed no cones or craters, or other familiar sign of volcanic action. On the contrary, they were not infrequently found to lie upon, and even to alternate

[1] See Pennant's *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, where Banks' narrative is inserted with a number of excellent engravings of the more remarkable features in Staffa.

[2] In the second edition of his *Crystallographie* (1783) he clearly distinguishes between crystallization and basaltic structure. The latter he regards as due to desiccation or cooling, tome i. p. 439.