

more perfect prisms a little further on, belonging to the same thin cake of dark stone that covered the plain which leads up to the foot of the great central puy.

Every year geological pilgrims now make their way to Auvergne, and wander over its marvellous display of cones, craters and lava-rivers. Each one of them climbs to the plateau of Prudelle, and from its level surface gazes in admiration across the vast fertile plain of the Limagne on the one side, and up to the chain of the puys on the other. Yet how few of them connect that scene with one of the great triumphs of their science, or know that it was there that Desmarest began the observations which directly led to the fierce contest over the origin of basalt!

That cautious observer tells us that amidst the infinite variety of objects around him, he drew no inference from this first occurrence of columns, but that his attention was aroused. He was kept no long time in suspense on the subject. "On the way back from the Puy de Dôme," he tells us, "I followed the thin sheet of black stone and recognised in it the characters of a compact lava. Considering further the thinness of this crust of rock, with its underlying bed of scoriæ, and the way in which it extended from the base of hills that were obviously once volcanoes, and spread out over the granite, I saw in it a true lava-stream which had issued from one of the neighbouring volcanoes. With this idea in my mind, I traced out the limits of the lava, and found again everywhere in its thickness the