

been various, and extend through a series of many centuries. Of these several interesting accounts have been transmitted. But of all its eruptions, that in 1669 was the most remarkable. It was attended, we are informed, with an earthquake, which, in an instant, overturned the town of Catania, though ten miles distant from the mountain, and buried no less than 18,000 persons in its ruins. The Earl of Winchelsea, who happened to be in Sicily at the time, informs us that, after the most violent internal struggle and shaking of the whole island, the lava at length burst forth in torrents, ascending, in the first instance, fifteen feet above the top of the opening, the flame at the same time rising as high as the loftiest steeple in England—that the lava, as it issued from the mountain, was poured along like melted iron—that it advanced into the sea six hundred yards, and was a mile in breadth—that in its course through the country it destroyed in forty days the habitations of 27,000 persons—that in its progress it met with a lake four miles in compass, and not only filled it up, though it was twenty-four fathoms deep, but raised it into a mountain—that solid burning rocks, five yards in diameter, were hurled to the distance of a mile, and many smaller ones upwards of three miles—that the sun did not appear for many weeks—that the day seemed to be turned into night—and that it was not till four months from the time it began to discharge its contents, that these dreadful symptoms abated.

It should be remarked, however, that though the eruptions are so dreadfully destructive for the time, yet they are frequently succeeded by showers of ashes, which speedily transform the beds of lava into an expanse of plenty, and the country resumes its former beauty and fertility.