

in size, whose weight cannot be less than sixteen tons — What an amazing force must it then have required not only to raise this enormous mass from the depths of the mountain, but to make it rise into the air to such a height, that it fell to the ground at a distance of three miles from the mouth of the crater, or opening of the volcano! When we consider how much the centre of the fire is below the base of the mountain, that the mountain itself is ten thousand feet high, and that there must therefore have been a power sufficient to raise this mass twelve thousand feet in height, the boldest imagination is lost in astonishment. The cause of these most wonderful mysteries of Nature is wholly unknown to man, although it cannot be doubted that one of the most probable conclusions to be drawn from them is, that the centre of this earth on which we live is in a fiery and burning state. There is not indeed any proof of this in the Holy Scriptures, but there are many reasons which lead the reflecting mind to some such opinion. And there is nothing in the Bible that in any way contradicts it; on the contrary, the revealed truth, that the world will hereafter be destroyed by fire, is in a great degree confirmed by our discovering that it is already only by the power of God prevented from being consumed by this very element, which is hidden in its bowels, and in many places bursts forth to warn and terrify the nations of the earth.

The celebrated volcano of Vesuvius, the desolating eruptions of which have been so often and so fatally experienced, is in Italy, about seven miles distant from Naples. It rises upon a vast plain, having two summits, the highest of which is the mouth of the volcano, which almost constantly emits smoke. Its height above the level of the sea is 3900 feet, and it may be ascended by three different roads, all very steep and difficult, from the conical form of the mountain, and the loose ashes, which slip from under the feet: from the base to the summit the distance is about three miles, and the platform at the top is about a mile across. For nearly two thirds of its height the mountain is cultivated, and has by no means a gloomy appearance; but here all verdure ceases, and the top is perfectly barren. Upon the lavas which the volcano long ago threw out, and which extend into the plain and to the sea, like great farrows, are built houses, villages, and towns. Gardens, vineyards, and cultivated fields surround them, but a feeling of sorrow, mixed with fear, about the future, arises in the recollection that, beneath a soil so fruitful and so smiling, lie buildings, gardens, and whole towns swallowed up. In the year after Christ 79, after a long interval of repose, the volcano suddenly burst forth, casting forth thick clouds of ash, and pumice stones, beneath which Herculaneum and Pompeii, two large and celebrated cities of antiquity, were completely buried. Thirty eight eruptions of Vesuvius are recorded in history up to the year 1806. That of 1779 has been described as among

the most remarkable, from its extraordinary and terrific appearance. During the whole of July the mountain was in a state of considerable fermentation; subterraneous explosions, and rumbling noises were heard, and quantities of smoke thrown up with great violence, some times with red hot-stones and ashes. On the 5th of August the volcano was greatly agitated, a white smoke issuing from the crater, at the same time that vast quantities of stones were thrown up to the supposed height of 2000 feet. The liquid lava having cleared the rim of the crater, flowed down the sides of the mountain to the distance of four miles, and the air was darkened by showers of reddish ashes. On the 7th, at midnight, a fountain of fire shot up from the crater to an incredible height, casting so bright a light that the smallest objects were easily seen at any place within six miles of the volcano. On the following evening, after a tremendous explosion, which broke the windows of a town at the foot of the mountain, another fountain of liquid fire rose to the surprising height of 10,000 feet (nearly two miles), while puffs of the blackest smoke accompanied the red-hot lava. The lava was partly directed by the wind towards the town of Ottaviano, on which so thick a shower of ashes fell, that had it been of longer continuance, that town would have shared the fate of Pompeii. It took fire in several places, and had there been much wind the inhabitants would have been burned in their houses, it being impossible for them to stir out. The rest of the lava, still red hot and liquid, fell on the two summits of Vesuvius, and the valley between them, forming one complete body of fire, which could not be less than two miles and a half in breadth, and casting a heat to the distance of at least six miles around. Another eruption happened on the 15th of June, 1794, at ten o'clock at night, and was announced by a shock of an earthquake, which was felt at Naples. At the same moment a fountain of bright fire, attended with a very black smoke, and a loud report, was seen to issue, and rise to a considerable height, from about the middle of the cone of Vesuvius, other fountains succeeded, and streamed down the sides of the mountain. The houses at Naples were for several hours in a constant tremor, the doors and windows shaking and rattling incessantly, and the bells ringing. At this awful moment the sky, from a bright full moon and star-light, became darkened; the moon seemed eclipsed, and was soon lost in obscurity. The murmurs of the prayers and lamentations of the people, forming various processions, and parading the streets, added to the horrors of the scene. On the following day a new mouth was opened on the opposite side of the mountain; from this aperture a considerable stream of lava issued, and ran with great swiftness through a wood which it burnt; but stopped, after having run about three miles in a few hours, before it reached the vineyards and cultivated lands. The lava which had flowed from several new mouths on the south side of the mountain reached