

trated at the southern islands of Great Britain and France. Anyone who has studied the sun spots and noted the vast outward rushes of fiery gas or material from the surface of the sun, projected thousands of miles into space, can imagine that at St. Pierre something of the kind, on an infinitesimal scale had happened. The fact that the volcano of Pelee had been "dead" for fifty years shows that there is an element of uncertainty about these splendid monuments to the hidden powers of the earth and suggests that those who insist upon living on the slopes of other "dead" or sleeping volcanoes, as Vesuvius, are acting with open eyes and taking the chance of death.

The United States, or that portion included in the continent proper, is comparatively free from such menaces to human life, yet there are many localities which show that the volcano has been in the past an active factor in the country. In New Mexico the traveller passes a number of old volcano cones, and miles of the country are covered with lava which ran in a fiery flood over the valleys, devastating the land. This is pointed out as the flow of an extinct volcano, and there is no legend or history to tell when it occurred. As a matter of convenience, an extinct volcano is one which has not displayed any activity for one hundred years, but this is no guarantee that is not liable to reawaken. The people who died at Herculaneum had been taught to believe that Vesuvius was an extinct volcano.

Volumes have been written about volcanoes and their causes, but in point of fact, very little is known about them beyond what we see. In the eighteenth century Humboldt tells us "225 volcanoes erupted," and this is known to be far below the actual number, and doubtless the "extinct" volcano is merely dormant. Etna, which towers 11,000 feet into the air and has a circumference of about 100 miles, has been active periodically for thousands of years—300,000 at least. For the past two thousand years it has had