

*Vesuvius* is the hon of Naples, and draws crowds of visitors. From every point of view it is the most prominent and the grandest feature in the landscape. It is about thirty miles in circumference at the base and rises from opposite the centre of the Bay of Naples to a height of 3,900 feet. From Portici, six or seven miles from the Chiaja, an athlete can climb to the top in three hours. Ordinarily, people used to ride on mules part of the way and then be dragged up with ropes, or carried on mens' shoulders to the summit. Now-a-days a much easier mode of transport has been provided, by the construction of a good turnpike road to the foot of the cone and a railway thence to within a short distance of the crater. The drive from Naples is a most enjoyable one. Twenty-four of us left the city together, in six carriages, each drawn by three horses. Such streams of people we met coming in from the country! pretty little donkeys laden with green-grocery: waggons drawn by mules wonderfully got up with scarlet trimmings, brass mountings, and jingling bells; and that most curious of all conveyances—the car-riole—a two-wheeled machine on which a dozen or more passengers are clustered like bees, and which dashes along at a furious pace, the light-hearted crew singing at the top of their voices. Stop here for a few seconds! Where are we? At Resina. "Ladies and gentlemen, seventy feet beneath your feet lies the city of Herculaneum!" Can it be possible that a city, once as bright and beautiful as Naples is to-day, was buried out of sight in a single night, and that it is lying here to-day just as it was left 1800 years ago? There is no doubt about it.

We left the shore and commenced the ascent by a winding road, over fields and lakes and rivers and cascades of lava, black as ebony. We had not gone far when we were joined by a band of musicians, seven in number, who marched alongside the carriages, playing the guitar and mendoline, and singing Neapolitan songs till the echoes rang again. We passed close to the Observatory, a large building surrounded by a garden and a few trees, which narrowly escaped destruction in 1872, when enormous streams of red hot lava flowed down on either side of it. So sudden was the eruption, the operator had not time to escape, but he survived the fiery ordeal,

and got credit for continuing his observations all the time that he was being roasted between two fires. Half an hour more brought us to the "Inferior station of the Funicular Railway," as it is called, where there is a refreshment room and a post and telegraph office. The view from this point is magnificent, including the city and bay of Naples, the towns and villages that line the shore, all the way to Castelammare and Sorrento, the distant mountains, the islands, and the sea. Above us there is the frowning cone, a thousand feet high, and the great transparent cloud of white vapour floating over it. This funny little railway—the steepest in the world—is 2,740 feet in length. It lifts us 850 feet in ten or twelve minutes, and lands us as near to the summit as it is deemed safe to go in that way. You must now follow your guide. It is not safe to venture alone. At any moment you might put your foot in it, or be enveloped in a swirl of stifling sulphurous steam. To reach the edge of the crater, you must go well to windward, and that implies a long detour, over a very rough and, in places, a very hot surface. From a hundred cracks and crevices, jets of steam are hissing at you, but you must keep as cool as you can: now that we are on the brink of the abyss, a false step would be fatal. Sit down.

My guide and I sat down, and gazed into the mysterious depths, but even here, the continuous discharge of vapour made it impossible for us to see very far. I had to take this man's word for it, that the crater is a mile and a half in circumference and about a thousand feet deep to the surface of the lava. Listen! There is no doubt about its "activity." Every now and then we could hear discharges down in the depths, as of stones and debris shot up with mighty force and falling back with a splash into the boiling cauldron. At other times there were muffled reports as of distant artillery, or like that which follows a submarine explosion. It was on Ash Wednesday, the day of the earthquakes that desolated the Riviera, that I sat here and listened to these dreadful sounds. If any one is sceptical as to the possibility of the world being burned up with fire, he need only sit here a short time to be convinced that the agency by which such a consummation might easily be brought