

Thirteen years before the final catastrophe, we learn from Tacitus that the luxurious repose of Pompeii had been disturbed by a terrible earthquake. At the time of the last disaster, the inhabitants had just regained confidence to set about the repairs which had been rendered necessary. It is curious to observe in several quarters the partially new work. In the Forum, for example—the Public Exchange of the city—new lengths in the shafts of the fluted columns, resting on more ancient bases, are to be seen. On the ground are lying portions of columns nearly ready to be put up. Here stone-cutters' tools were found scattered about, as they had been left by their owners. Pillars in Pompeii, however, are not everywhere of stone; many are of brick, stuccoed. Indeed I was rather surprised to find in Rome, as well as here, how largely brick and stucco enter into the material of ancient buildings. Pompeii was situated at the mouth of the Sarnus; and most of the streets which have been uncovered, ran down to the edge of the sea westward from the entrance of the river. But the accumulations of volcanic substances have thrust off both the river and the sea—the former half a mile, the latter two miles, from their ancient places. Up every street, as you look towards the north-west, Vesuvius closes the vista—still showing, by his ever restless column of steam, how capable he is of again rousing up his destructive energies. About two-thirds of the city still remain unexcavated. Where the excavations cease, you can approach and examine the perpendicular sections of the whole mass of accumulated material. You observe immediately that numerous showers of volcanic matter have descended since A.D. 79.

Near the Amphitheatre, the different strata with their thicknesses may be traced as follows, beginning with the surface:—(1) Black sparkling sand (recent), 3 inches; (2) Vegetable mould, 3 feet; (3) Brown incoherent tuff, 1 foot 6 inches; (4) Small scorie and white lapilli, 3 inches; (5) Brown earthy tuff, 9 inches; (6) Brown earthy tuff, with lapilli, 4 feet; (7) Layer of whitish lapilli, 1 inch; (8) Grey solid tuff, 3 inches; (9) Pumice and white lapilli, 3 inches:—in all, 10 feet 4 inches (Lyell). Another observation, where the thickness is 20 feet, gives the arrangement of the strata as follows, beginning from below:—Separating the whole into five parts—the first three consist of pumice-stone in small pieces, resembling a light white cinder, and covering the pavement to the depth of 12 feet; the next portion, composed of six parts, begins with a stratum of small black stones, 3 inches in thickness; to this succeeds a thin layer of dry mud; upon this lies another stratum of little stones, of a mixed hue, in which blue predominates; then comes a second stratum of mud, separated from a third by a thin wavy line of mixed blue stones: this completes the fourth portion; while the fifth or highest division consists entirely of vegetable earth or decomposed volcanic matter (Gell). In the neighbourhood of Pompeii you see large fields of the cotton-plant, which about here reaches its northern limit in Europe. On leaving the inn near the ruined city, I was taken by surprise, by being presented with a bouquet of bursting cotton-pods and flowers, accompanied by a salute upon the hand—the graceful offerings of a handsome peasant to whom during the day I had given a few baiocchi for some little service rendered.