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A TRIP TO VESUVIUS.

Never shall I forget my first glimpse of Vesuvius. We had left far behind us Rome, ancient and yet modern—the former appellation amply justified by its ruins, the latter by its American hotels and modern luxuries—and were rapidly nearing the world-renowned Naples, though not, in the words of the Italian proverb, with the intention to “see Naples and die.” Suddenly we beheld a red light in the sky, which we at once pronounced to be the moon. How often, I wonder, has a fire been taken for the moon, and *vice versa*! by those who are ignorant or forgetful of the times and seasons! But on our recollecting that about this time the moon was shedding its rays somewhere on the other side of the horizon we were forced to the conclusion that this ball of fire, looking so weird in the darkness of the night, was none other than the breath of the far-famed “Vesuvius.” After arriving at our hotel we gazed from the balcony for some time, before retiring for the night, at the strange appearance, and solemn feelings crept over us. How could we go to sleep with that mountain breathing fire in such close proximity to us? Ever and anon the red light would slowly die away and then suddenly reappear. It looked like some danger signal hung up in the sky, and danger signal it was, as but three or four short weeks afterwards the terrible disaster at Ischia testified—warning the inhabitants of the neighboring country that they were living over a fiery furnace. From that time we could never day or night lose sight of the burning mountain; it was always present to us, in the daytime as a cloud of smoke, and at night as a ball of fire, though we were told the red appearance was but the reflection of the internal fire and not actual flame. We could then realize in some slight degree the awe which must have possessed the Israelites of old. Of course we could not leave Naples without paying a visit to Vesuvius. As we had gazed on Pompeii, we must needs see the originator of such destruction. It being the month of July, about the worst season of the year for such a trip, our guide advised us to visit the volcano as early in the day as possible to avoid the mid-day sun. After appointing a day for the trip, the night previous thereto we retired early, but not to sleep. There are things which produce sleeplessness which are not included under the head “Insomnia,” and for which Naples is almost as famous

as it is for beggars. So after a restless night we left the hotel at 4 a.m., without breakfast, to make the ascent. As I gazed upon the comfortable carriage drawn by three iron grey horses (abreast)—powerful and eager for the fray—I could not help thinking what an interesting turn-out this would be for King Street, Toronto. Our coachman was a short and sturdy Italian; our guide large, broad shouldered and smiling. It was a beautiful morning; everything seemed propitious as we prepared to “do” Vesuvius. The driver cracked his long whip and off we went. Though the hour was early the streets were well filled with people of all classes, but principally those from the country who were coming to market. We met numbers of comical little mules harnessed snugly to little carts, piled high with garden produce, on the top of which were men and women folk in such numbers one would think the little mules would be crushed beneath their loads, but they seemed well used to the Neapolitan lash and burdens, and trotted along in perfect contentment. Here we saw in sweet (?) profusion the Lazzaroni—men with arms, men without them; deaf dumb, lame, halt and blind; impotent and impertinent; impecunious and importunate. Though almost destitute of clothing they were each and all provided with a hat, and though the air was a little chilly, yet polite to the last degree they approached us hat in hand. They seemed in no way disconcerted if we refused to accede to their demands, but calmly turned away to await the coming of the next passer-by. We found the most expeditious way of getting rid of them was by haranguing them with the Queen’s English, to which they responded in native Italian, probably Neapolitan profanity, which passed harmlessly over our heads. We, though going at a good speed, occupied an hour and a half in getting out of Naples, but there was so much to be seen on every side, every phase of Neapolitan life being represented, that the time passed very quickly. Finally we drew to the foot of the burning monster, majestic in the stillness, looming far above us, and began the ascent. The road was, of course, a winding one, and we doubled on our tracks continually as we steadily mounted higher. It seemed a very short distance we had to traverse, yet we went on and on and did not lessen it perceptibly, but the grandeur of the piles of lava scattered far and wide around us gave us ample food for reflection though it did not serve to allay the pangs of hunger which were