

due undoubtedly to the earthquakes, which are of frequent occurrence in the neighborhood of Vesuvius, and more particularly to the one which preceded the eruption of that mount in A. D. 79.

The original inhabitants of Pompeii were Greeks. Several other colonies of the same origin were founded both in the south and west of Italy, and, though at first they were merely settlements of Greek traders, they often rose to an importance sufficient to tempt the covetous eye of Rome. The first attempt made by that ambitious city to get possession of Pompeii was in the year B. C. 340. It was then conquered, but remained virtually independent for a considerable length of time after. Very little is known of it after this, until we find it mentioned in the Marsian war, B. C. 90, when it joined the confederacy with the other towns in their rebellion against Rome.

Some sixteen years previous to the outburst of Vesuvius which wrought such complete destruction, the city was visited by an earthquake which ruined a large portion of it. Its inhabitants undertook to build it up again, and the process of reconstruction was going on, when another earthquake, accompanied by a most violent eruption of the volcano, entirely overthrew the town.

At this distance of time it may seem the greatest folly for anyone to have settled in the vicinity of so formidable a volcano. But when we consider the many attractions of the spot, and the charms offered to all lovers of the beautiful in nature, we do not wonder that many approached in close proximity to it, and even built their dwellings on its very slopes. Besides, in those days, there was nothing to be apprehended from it, as it had been, for years before, practically quiescent. No thought for a moment took possession of the minds of the inhabitants that they were constantly in imminent danger of being overwhelmed by that seemingly gentle neighbor, and, hence, we find them after the earthquake of A. D. 63, confidently setting to work to repair the damage done to their city by the shock it received. But before they had time to finish, came the first great outburst of Vesuvius, and Pompeii lay buried beneath a coating of lava that left no trace of it to

be found except here and there, where a few of the highest edifices for centuries after peered above the level.

The city contained probably about 20,000 inhabitants, and of these comparatively few lost there lives at the time of the destruction of the city, since the number of skeletons discovered up to the present does not exceed 2000. It is said that when the eruption broke out nearly the whole of Pompeii was assembled in the amphitheatre to witness some gladiatorial or other show, which fact would account for the escape of so many.

Nearer to Vesuvius than Pompeii by a short distance, and in a north-westerly direction from that city is the smaller one of Herculaneum, which suffered a similar fate. Almost directly south from Pompeii was another town called Stabiae, on whose site Castellamare now stands. The destructive substances ejected by the volcano were carried even there, and buried that with the others. Little is known of their history and few excavations have been made in them, so that they are far from enjoying such universal fame as that which Pompeii possesses. Excavations were commenced at Herculaneum, even before Pompeii was discovered, but the efforts made to disclose the treasures hidden therein have not been so successful as in the latter city. Several circumstances combine to bring about this result. On the exact spot under which lie the ruins of Herculaneum, we find to-day two towns called Resina and Portici, and, therefore, it requires the greatest care in excavating to preserve the foundations of the buildings above. Herculaneum seems to be buried under the volcanic matter of several eruptions, whereas Pompeii owes its destruction to the single one of A. D. 79. And besides, whether it is that the volcanic substances have become petrified or that they have become compact by their immense weight, the excavators experience the utmost difficulty in cutting away the hardened matter; and, when cut away, it is so prodigiously heavy that it is practically impossible to remove it to the surface.

Pompeii, like most of the Roman towns, was surrounded by a wall, a considerable portion of which still remains. But this is of no great archaeological importance.