

buttress-like dykes of subsequent and apparently harder lava jutting out from the semi-circular escarpment of this, the original gigantic crater of the volcano of the pre-historic times; and after satisfying your curiosity as well as the time will admit, you return and begin the ascent of the cone.

The place chosen for this exploit is a part built up, so to speak, with closely-packed fragments of lava and slag, between the interstices and among the prominences of which you insert your feet, to the certain disruption of only moderately strong shoes. The whole inclination of Vesuvius, were it uniform from Resina to the lip of the crater, would be only about thirteen degrees. Up to the base of the cone it is still less; but the cone itself is inclined at an angle of forty-three degrees. The perpendicular height of the cone is about 1000 feet; so that it can easily be conceived that the physical labour of ascending it—to a person not accustomed to climb—is for the time extremely painful. It requires, indeed, many "corragios" from the guide, and some assistance from a looped strap which he throws over his shoulder for you to lay hold of, to enable you to persevere.

While toiling thus sorely up this steep, I began to be convinced that the good Franks of yore really did mean by their word "travail" what some etymologists have asserted. To get "trans vallum"—beyond the wall—to scale the precipitous flank of some old Roman camp, was doubtless to their warriors some such task, as this—a difficulty memorable enough, certainly, to be embodied in a term.

At length, after numerous rests, and after a lapse of perhaps an hour and a half, you find yourself on the comparatively level platform which leads to the lip of the great crater. The desire accomplished is found to be truly sweet on such an occasion, and the propensity to be noisily elated is quite overpowering. A strong wind blowing in our direction, sweeping down over us a huge column of vapour, which completely obstructs the vision, obliges us several times still to halt in our ascent of the final gently inclined plane.

At last we are on the brink of the great crater, and we find ourselves looking down into a gigantic and tolerably sooty-looking flue, up which from unknown mysterious depths are rolling volumes of what in the distance seems smoke, but which is, in fact, steam—steam carrying up with it a variety of choking gases. The whole breathing apparatus becomes immediately painfully affected, and we are reminded of the sensation suddenly experienced when one passes the nostrils over the edge of some great vat where fermentation is going on. The reverberation of a shout directed by the guide or yourself down into the undefined abyss is sufficiently awe-inspiring. Its effect can in some degree be conceived by imagining how a shout would sound when directed into a hollow cask one thousand feet in diameter.

The view obtained in every direction from this position is in the highest degree interesting and exciting. The Appenines form the background of the picture, a congeries of secondary and tertiary formations, exhibiting in their retiring ranges phase after phase of the finest aerial colouring. On one side you look down upon a city, pre-eminently of the living, ever on the stir and outwardly joyous—the syren-city, a sight of which its inhabitants fondly say might reconcile a man to the relinquishment of life. On another side, in solemn and instructive contrast, you see cities of the dead—historic fossil beds—mines not yet exhausted by the student and philosopher. Around you, on the left and right, are Capri, Ischia, Procida, Miseno, Baiæ, names summoning up images of beauty and long trains of shadowy forms and events. Yonder is Posilipo, the "grief-dispelling," the favourite haunt of the poet who, before the Christian era, sang the praises of this region, and whose tomb

now consecrates that height. Before you, far and wide, lies the tideless sea, a household word throughout the world, whose name recalls the ideas with which the old cosmographers vainly tried to satisfy inquiring minds—whose serene surface, stretching to the distant south and west, still now as of yore reflects and sets off to best advantage the never tiring, because sublime pageantry attendant on the demise of each successive day.

After traversing a portion of the rim of the great crater,—its whole circumference is 5624 feet,—holding firmly the arm of the experienced guide, you begin to clamber obliquely down into the interior of the orifice. Your feet sink deep in black pulverized lava or sand. You observe underneath the surface everywhere beautiful primrose-coloured sulphur, perpetually deposited here, I am informed, from the constantly ascending hydro-sulphuric acid gas. You observe the stratification of the successive accumulations on the cone. Everything is sensibly hot to the touch. At the direction of your conductor, you thrust your hand into various holes and crevices, and you are fain to draw it out again as quickly as possible—the heat either remaining from the eruption of 1850, or maintained by the continual ascent of hot vapour from below.

After descending some yards, what with the increasing gloom, the oppressive heat, the obscurity of the undefined depth on the left, the boisterous rush of air every now and then from above, blinding and choking you with steam, the adventure seems—to a novice at least—to be sufficiently beset with terrors; and one is not sorry when it is at last determined to re-ascend without actually setting foot on the floor of the crater, one hundred and fifty feet below.

The place chosen for the descent of the cone is wholly diverse from that just now described in my account of its ascent. Conceive one of those great earth-works which in so many directions are now advancing across our Canadian valleys for railway purposes. Imagine the perpendicular height of the part where the labourers are shooting down load after load of loose soil to be one thousand feet, and the inclination of the slope to be precisely the angle at which the material will remain at rest—you have then an idea of the part of the cone where tourists go down from the summit of Vesuvius. This side is of course selected from its being composed, not of closely-packed masses of slag and lava, but of pulverized volcanic matter.

Linking yourself firmly to your guides' arm, you plunge fearlessly off. You take strides which seem miraculous. The material in which you plant your heels goes down along with you and after you. You have only to take care that nothing arrests the action of your feet;—any obstruction might send you centrifugally forwards. Everything being in your favour, you are of course at the bottom in an incredibly short space of time. I remarked just now on the never-to-be-forgotten painful exhaustion produced in the ascent of this cone: its descent is equally memorable for the exhilarating and quickening effect which it has on personages even of the gravest carriage.

At the foot of the cone the patient ponies are waiting. After satisfying a number of noisy applicants who claim to have rendered you service, you mount, and, accompanied by men carrying torches—for it is now dark night—you amble gently down to Resina. From thence you drive into Naples. Your mind throughout the day has been receiving impressions which are to endure for life, and it has become in an extraordinary degree excited. You feel and welcome the calming influence of the quiet stars that burn above you, and which recall the kindred splendours of your own far-distant skies.