

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 laborers 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.

The first recorded eruption of Vesuvius is that of A.D. 79, when Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiae were overwhelmed. It is supposed that by this explosion