

of small shining lights, six or eight in number, creeping, as it seemed, along the edge of the stream of lava; and, when contrasted with the red blaze which rose behind, and the gigantic black background, looking like a procession of glow-worms. These were the torches of travellers ascending the mountain, and I longed to be one of them.

We reached Resina a little before nine, and alighted from the carriage; the ascent being so rugged and dangerous, that only asses and mules accustomed to the road are used. Two only were in waiting at the moment we arrived, which L** immediately secured for me and himself; and though reluctant to proceed without the rest of the party, we were compelled to go on before, that we might not lose time, or hazard the loss of our *monture*. We set off then, each with two attendants, a man to lead our animals and a torch-bearer. The road, as we ascended, became more and more steep at every step, being over a stream of lava, intermixed with stones and ashes, and the darkness added to the difficulty. But how shall I describe the scene and the people who surrounded us; the landscape partially lighted by a fearful red glare, the precipitous and winding road bordered by wild looking gigantic aloes, projecting their huge spear-like leaves almost across our path, and our lazzaroni attendants with their shrill shouts, and strange dresses, and wild jargon, and striking features, and dark eyes flashing in the gleam of the torches, which they flung round their heads to prevent their being extinguished, formed a scene so new, so extraordinary, so like romance, that my attention was frequently drawn from the mountain, though blazing in all its tumultuous magnificence.

The explosions succeeded each other with terrific rapidity about two in every three minutes; and the noise I can only compare to the roaring and hissing of ten thousand imprisoned winds, mingled at times with a rumbling sound like artillery or distant thunder. It frequently happened that the guides, in dashing their torches against the ground, set fire to the dried thorns and withered grass, and the blaze ran along the earth like wildfire, to the great alarm of poor L**, who saw in every burning bush a stream of lava rushing to overwhelm us.

Before eleven o'clock we reached the Hermitage, situated between Vesuvius and the Somma, and the highest habitation on the mountain. A great number of men were assembled within, and guides, lazzaroni, servants, and soldiers, were lounging round. I alighted, for I was benumbed and tired, but did not like to venture among these people, and it was proposed that we should wait for the rest of our party a little farther on. We accordingly left our donkeys and walked forward upon a kind of high ridge which serves to fortify the Hermitage and its environs against the lava. From this path, as we slowly ascended, we had a glorious view of the eruption; and the whole scene around us, in its romantic interest and terrible magnificence,

mocked all power of description. There were, at this time, five distinct torrents of lava rolling down like streams of molten lead; one of which extended above two miles below us, and was flowing towards Portici. The show-ers of red hot stones flew up like thousands of sky-rockets: many of them being shot up perpendicularly, fell back into the crater, others falling on the outside bounded down the side of the mountain with a velocity which would have distanced a horse at full speed: these stones were of every size, from two to ten or twelve feet in diameter.

My ears were by this time wearied and stunned by the unceasing roaring and hissing of the flames, while my eyes were dazzled by the glare of the red, fierce light: now and then I turned them for relief to other features of the picture, to the black shadowy masses of the landscape stretched beneath us, and speckled with shining lights, which showed how many were up and watching that night; and often to the calm vaulted sky above our heads, where thousands of stars (not twinkling as through our hazy or frosty atmosphere, but shining out of "heaven's profoundest azure," with that soft steady brilliancy peculiar to a highly rarified medium,) looked down upon this frightful turmoil in all their bright and placid loveliness. Nor should I forget one other feature of a scene on which I looked with a painter's eye. Great numbers of the Austrian forces, now occupying Naples, were on the mountains, assembled in groups, some standing, some sitting, some stretched on the ground and wrapped in their cloaks, in various attitudes of amazement and admiration: and as the shadowy glare fell on their tall martial figures and glittering accoutrements, I thought I had never beheld anything so wildly picturesque.

The remainder of our party not yet appearing, we sent back for our asses and guides, and determined to proceed. About half a mile beyond our companions came up, and here a division took place; some agreeing to go forward, the rest turning back to wait at the Hermitage. I was of course one of those who advanced. My spirits were again raised, and the grand object of all this daring and anxiety was to approach near enough to a stream of lava to have some idea of its consistency, and the manner in which it flowed or trickled down. The difficulties of our road now increased, "if road that might be called which road was none," but black loose ashes, and masses of scoria and lava heaped in ridges, or broken into hollows in a manner not to be described. Even my animal, though used to the path, felt his footing at every step, and if the torch was by accident extinguished, he stopped, and nothing could make him move. My guide, Andrea, was very vigilant and attentive, and in the few words of Italian he knew, encouraged me, and assured me there was no danger. I had, however, no fear: in fact, I was infinitely too much interested to have been alive to danger, had it really existed. Salvador, well known to all who have visited Mount