

Driving back to Naples, we stopped for a few hours at Resina and descended beneath the city through the various pits and galleries where we saw a part of the great theatre of Herculaneum. The modern city is built upon the vast mass of lava which covers Herculaneum to a depth of sixty feet. The mud which originally submerged this place was covered in later years by rivers of flinty lava. It is, of course, impossible to carry on open excavations, and all that can be done is in the way of sinking shafts and boring galleries, as in a mine. A large space has been excavated in the theatre, where we saw some of the seats, and in the galleries around we came across occasional bits of fresco.

Herculaneum is the exact opposite of Pompeii in appearance. The latter is open everywhere to the sky; so finely laid out that one can find any particular house in an instant, and when one enters a house everything can be seen at a glance,—the mosaic pavements, the aquarium, the apartments and all the details of ornamentation. On the other hand, one might ride over Herculaneum for years and see no indication that a city was buried beneath. One descends into the earth and sees the limited excavations only by the flickering light of a candle. Then, too, the loose stones and dust at Pompeii are so easily removed that the most delicate objects are not harmed in the least, while at Herculaneum the hard lava must be chiselled out, bit by bit, resulting in the destruction of the delicate objects imbedded within.

A small part of the city lying nearest the sea has been opened up, showing part of a street with fine houses on each side; but the great hill of lava arrests further open excavation and will probably continue to do so for all time.

The next morning found us again at Resina, prepared to ascend the volcano. We determined to make the journey on foot, feeling sure that the clearer idea gained thereby would more than repay us for the extra effort.

After walking for two hours, we came to great fields of brown lava, piled up in fantastic forms, and covering the mountain-side as far as we could see. In another hour we reached the observatory, situated on a little spur, the rivers of new lava having run down on either side. The road at this point turned abruptly to the right, as the former road had been obliterated during a recent eruption. Climbing over this for another hour, we reached the base of the cone and had the most difficult part of the journey before us.

The sides of the cone form an angle of forty-five degrees. The surface is made up of loose sand, many inches in depth, with an occasional bit of jagged lava protruding. The ascent was therefore extremely difficult, as we would slip back frequently and could only progress when we found a piece of lava for a firm footing. Stopping frequently to rest, we toiled up the steep incline, being protected from the sun by a dense cloud which hung just over the mountain. At last we reached the top and entered the railed enclosure at the terminus of the funicular railway. Here two of the government guides took us in hand while we were to be near the crater. Later we ascertained the reason for this supervision.

We now stood on the summit of Vesuvius, the dread volcano which had caused the havoc we had witnessed the previous day. Through rifts in the clouds we caught glimpses of Pompeii, Resina, Naples, and the beautiful country below.