

eruptions of volcanoes, or, in the earthquake's shock, shake the foundations of a whole continent at once, burying the inhabitants of great cities under their ruins, the most satisfactory explanation is furnished by the theory which represents the interior of the globe as being in a state of high incandescence or molten fluidity. Our globe is, in fact, but a huge ocean of fire, enveloped with a cooled rocky crust, on the outside of which we have our being. This crust is of varying thickness in different places, and, from various causes, has been rent and fissured. Through these rents and fissures the molten mass within escapes, creating volcanic eruptions; or it may be also that water finds its way through, and coming in contact with the heated mass, generates steam and other gases; and these exploding or struggling to expand, produce earthquakes. Thus the throat of the volcano is the vent for the internal vapours of the globe; and the earthquake's shock, which makes whole nations quake, are the effects of awful explosions in earth's caverns, or are caused by the pressure of huge waves of fire, rolling convulsively, and undulating and bending the thin crust which confines them.

It is a striking fact that some of the regions of the earth in which volcanic action is most frequent, and earthquakes most common, are nevertheless among the most habitable and delightful on our globe. The fertility of their soil is proverbial, and is owing to the matter ejected by repeated eruptions. We wonder, at times, that people are mad enough to rebuild their dwellings on the slopes of Vesuvius and *Ætna*, or in Chili and Peru, on spots so often devastated by earthquakes, notwithstanding the records of history and the threatenings of nature. Yet so beautiful, fertile and attractive are these regions of the globe that, in spite of all perils, they will ever be the most densely peopled districts of earth. The sloping sides of Vesuvius alone sustain a population of eighty thousand souls. In such places, where nature lavishes her most precious gifts in richest profusion, men forget or despise dangers. These "Burnt Fields" around Naples, are among the most beautiful and attractive scenes in the world, combining all that is soft and delicious in climate with all that is lovely and majestic in scenery. Other bays and cities may be beautiful, but Naples alone comprises all actual and possible elements of beauty. No wonder that in the palmy days of the Roman Empire, it was the fairy-land of poets and the favourite retreat of some of the