

animals, as to those which support terrestrial species. The sloping sides of Vesuvius give nourishment to a vigorous and healthy population of about eighty thousand souls; and the surrounding hills and plains, together with several of the adjoining isles, owe the fertility of their soil to matter ejected by prior eruptions. Had the fundamental limestone of the Apennines remained uncovered throughout the whole area, the country could not have sustained a twentieth part of its present inhabitants. This will be apparent to every geologist who has marked the change in the agricultural character of the soil the moment he has passed the utmost boundary of the volcanic ejections, as when, for example, at the distance of about seven miles from Vesuvius, he leaves the plain and ascends the declivity of the Sorrentine Hills.

Yet, favoured as this region has been by Nature from time immemorial, the signs of the changes imprinted on it during the period that it has served as the habitation of man may appear in after-ages to indicate a series of unparalleled disasters. Let us suppose that at some future time the Mediterranean should form a gulf of the great ocean, and that the waves and tidal current should encroach on the shores of Campania, as it now advances upon the eastern coast of England; the geologist will then behold the towns already buried, and many more which will evidently be entombed hereafter, laid open in the steep cliffs, where he will discover buildings superimposed above each other, with thick intervening strata of tuff or lava—some unscathed by fire, like those of Herculaneum and Pompeii; others half melted down, as in Torre del Greco; and many shattered and thrown about in strange confusion, as in Tripergola, beneath Monte Nuovo. Among the ruins will be seen skeletons of men, and impressions of the human form stamped in solid rocks of tuff. Nor will the signs of earthquakes be wanting. The pavement of part of the Domitian Way, and the Temple of the Nymphs, submerged at high tide, will be uncovered at low water, the columns remaining erect and uninjured. Other temples which had once sunk down, like that of Serapis, will be found to have been upraised again by subsequent movements. If they who study these phenomena, and speculate on their causes, assume that there were periods when the laws of Nature or the whole course of natural events differed greatly from those observed in their own time, they will scarcely hesitate to refer the wonderful monuments in question to those primeval ages. When they consider the numerous proofs of reiterated catastrophes to which the region was subject, they may, perhaps, commiserate the unhappy fate of beings condemned to inhabit a planet during its nascent and chaotic state, and feel grateful that their favoured race has escaped such scenes of anarchy and misrule.

Yet what was the real condition of Campania during those years of dire convulsion? "A climate where heaven's breath smells sweet and wooingly—a vigorous and luxuriant nature unparalleled in its productions—a coast which was once the fairy-land of poets, and the favourite retreat of great men. Even the tyrants of the