

itself lowered down upon the surrounding country, involving land and sea in profound darkness, pierced by flashes of fire more vivid than lightning. These, with the volumes of ashes that began to encumber the soil, and which covered the sea with floating pumice-stone; the constant heaving of the ground; and the sudden recoil of the sea, form a picture which is wonderfully well described by the Younger Pliny. His uncle, animated by an eager desire to know what was going on, and to afford aid to the inhabitants of the towns, made sail for the nearest point of the coast and landed; but was instantly enveloped in the dense sulphureous vapour that swept down from the mountain, and perished miserably.

(29.) It does not seem that any *lava* flowed on that occasion. Pompeii was buried under the ashes; Herculaneum by a torrent of mud, probably the contents of the crater, ejected at the first explosion. This was most fortunate. We owe to it the preservation of some of the most wonderful remains of antiquity. For it is not yet much more than a century ago that, in digging a well at Portici near Naples, the Theatre of Herculaneum was discovered, some sixty feet under ground,—then houses, baths, statues, and, most interesting of all, a library, full of books; and those books still legible, and among them the writings of some ancient authors which had never before been met with, but which have now been read, copied, and published, while hundreds and hundreds, I am sorry to say, still remain unopened. Pompeii was not buried so deep; the walls of some of