

hand, abundant springs well forth in localities that were formerly dry and barren, or the ancient fountains are silenced, and the thermal waters cooled.

The very various effects of earthquakes tend to invest with an air of probability certain events recorded in the chronicles of the ancient world. Who would now dare to contradict the assertion of Pliny—following the older historians—that Sicily was sundered from Italy by an earthquake? Is there not, indeed, every reason to believe that such an event actually took place? Who would contradict the same author—credulous as he often shows himself—when he adds that the blooming island of Cyprus was separated from Syria by the same cause, and Negropont (the ancient Eubœa) from Bœotia? Are we in a position to deny positively the former existence of the famous Atlantis, which, according to Egyptian traditions, has disappeared beneath the waves, when we shall have to refer to contemporary facts of an analogous character? The events now transpiring under our eyes explain what has occurred in past times.

The relations embodied in modern works do but reproduce the very catastrophes whose story has been transmitted to us either by the poets or chroniclers of antiquity. If the poet who wrote under the name of Homer is silent—a circumstance sufficiently remarkable—in reference to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, though in his era Greece and Asia Minor were undoubtedly ravaged by the subterranean fires, Virgil describes in detail the paroxysms of Etna.

[“Ætna, with her voice of fear,
In weltering chaos thunders near.
Now pitchy clouds she belches forth
Of cinders red and vapours swarth,
And from her caverns lifts on high
Live balls of flame that lick the sky;
Now with more dire convulsion flings
Disploded rocks, her heart's rent strings,
And lava torrents hurls to-day,
A burning gulf of fiery spray.”*]

Pindar, long before the time of Virgil, recorded the volcanic phenomena with equal spirit and accuracy; the streams of flame that poured forth from the bowels of the mountain, and the lava-rivers, that in the daytime emitted only clouds of smoke, but at night glowed like sheets of fire rushing towards the sea.† In the

* [Virgil, “Æneid,” iii. 570–577, Professor Conington’s translation.]

† [Pindar “Pyth.,” i. 40.]