

about volcanoes, earthquakes, and fossils, occurring here and there in this work, are not always trustworthy. They seem, in most cases, to have been based on indirect information. By a tragic decree of fate, the untiring student and naturalist met his death while engaged in observing the grandest geological event of antiquity, the first outbreak of Vesuvius in the year 79 A.D. Pliny the Younger describes the death of his uncle in two letters to Tacitus, recounting how at the beginning of the eruption the elder Pliny was stationed at Misenum as Commander of the Fleet, but went at once to Stabia to bring help to the sufferers and to witness the great drama of nature. He died in the open field, probably suffocated by the volcanic vapour and ash. His corpse was found unharmed three days later, when the darkened sky gradually became clear. The younger Pliny's vivid description of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, and the accompanying earthquake, is one of the most remarkable literary productions in the domain of geology. It is certainly curious that he should have omitted to mention the earth-tremors at Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabia, confirmation of which has however been given by Dio Cassius.

A poetic account of an eruption of Mount Etna is happily amongst the fragments that have been preserved from the works of Lucilius, the poet in the second century A.D. Altogether this volcano played a very important *rôle* in the literature of the ancient writers. Nor were the Romans devoid of interest in fossils: Suetonius relates that the Emperor Augustus decorated his villa in Capri with huge fossil bones, which at that time were held to be the remains of a giant race.

If we pass in review what antiquity has bequeathed to us of actual geological knowledge, we find our heritage surprisingly meagre. The tendency of eastern races towards the fanciful, and of the Greeks to philosophical speculations, brought forth an abundance of hypotheses about the origin of the universe and the development of the earth; and even although some of these may in part coincide with accepted scientific conceptions of the present day, it has to be remembered that in these cases the early hypotheses were rather happy "guesses at truth," than general theories founded inductively upon a series of accurately observed data.

Far more valuable than the most ingenious speculations are