

No. 4. PRICE ONE PENNY.

DESCRIPTION OF  
MOUNT VESUVIUS

*With an Account of its various Eruptions.*

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE DOG OF MONTARGIS,  
*A very Singular and True Story.*

A Selection of  
Amusing and Instructive  
READING;

COMPRISING THE

MEMOIRS AND ANECDOTES

OF

Singular & Eccentric Characters,

HISTORICAL FACTS, AND

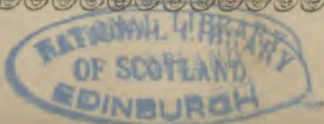
GEOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS, &c., &c.,

Collected from Costly and Rare Works,

BY JOHN NICHOLSON,

PRINTER AND PUBLISHER,

KIRKCUDBRIGHT.



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MOUNT VESUVIUS, NEAR NAPLES: ITS DESCRIPTION AND VARIOUS ERUPTIONS.

The fluid lake that works below,  
Bitumen, sulphur, salt, and iron scum,  
Heaves up its boiling tide. The lab'ring mount  
Is torn with agenzizing throes. At once,  
Forth from its side disparted, blazing pours  
A mighty river; burning in prone waves,  
'That glimmer thro' the night, to yonder plain,  
Divided there a hundred torrent streams,  
Each ploughing up its bed, roll dreadful on,  
Resistless. Villages, and woods, and rocks,  
Fall flat before their sweep. The region round,  
Where myrtle walks and groves of golden fruit  
Rose fair; where harvest waved in all its pride;  
And where the vineyard spread its purple store,  
Maturing into nectar; now despoiled  
Of herb, leaf, fruit and flower, from end to end  
Lies buried under fire, a glowing sea!

MALLET.

THIS celebrated volcano, which has for so many ages attracted the attention of mankind, and the desolating eruptions of which have been so often and so fatally experienced, is distant in an eastern direction, about seven miles from Naples. It rises, insulated, upon a vast and well-cultivated plain, presenting two summits on the same base, in which particular it resembles Mount Parnassus. One of these, La Somma, is generally agreed to have been the Vesuvius of Strabo and the ancients; the other, having the greatest ele-

vation, is the mouth of the volcano, which almost constantly emits smoke. Its height above the level of the sea is 3,900 feet, and it may be ascended by three different routes, which are all very steep and difficult, from the conical form of the mountain, and the loose ashes which slip from under the feet; still from the base to the summit, the distance is not more than three Italian miles. The circumference of the platform on the top is 5,024 feet, or nearly a mile. Thence may be seen Portici, Capræa, Ischia, Pausilippo, and the whole coast of the gulf of Naples, bordered with orange trees; the prospect is that of Paradise seen from that of the infernal regions.

On approaching the mountain, its aspect does not convey any impression of terror, nor is it gloomy, being cultivated for more than two-thirds of its height, and having its brown top alone barren. There all verdure ceases; yet, when it appears covered with clouds, which sometimes encompass its middle only, this circumstance rather adds to, than detracts from, the magnificence of the spectacle. Upon the lavas which the volcano long ago ejected, and which, like great furrows, extend into the plain, and to the sea, are built houses, villages, and towns. Gardens, vineyards, and cultivated fields, surround them; but a sentiment of sorrow, blended with ap-

prehensions about the future, arises on the recollection that, beneath a soil so fruitful and so smiling, lie edifices, gardens, and whole towns swallowed up. Portici rests upon Herculaneum; its environs upon Resina; and at a little distance is Pompeii, in the streets of which, after more than seventeen centuries of non-existence, the astonished traveller now walks. After a long interval of repose, in the first year of the reign of Titus, (the seventy-ninth of the christian era,) the volcano suddenly broke out, ejecting thick clouds of ashes and pumice-stones, beneath which Herculaneum, Stabia, and Pompeii, were completely buried. This eruption was fatal to the elder Pliny, the historian, who fell a victim to his humanity and love of science. Even at this day, in speaking of Vesuvius, the remembrance of his untimely death excites a melancholy regret. All the coast to the east of the gulf of Naples was, on the above occasion, ravaged and destroyed, presenting nothing but a long succession of ejected matters from Herculaneum to Stabia, The destruction did not, however extend to the western part, but stopped at Naples, which suffered comparatively little.

Thirty-eight eruptions of Vesuvius are recorded in history up to the year 1806. That of 1779 has been described by Sir William Hamilton as among the most remarkable,



from its extraordinary and terrific appearance. During the whole of July, the mountain was in a state of considerable fermentation, subterraneous explosion and rumbling noises being heard, and quantities of smoke thrown up with great violence, sometimes with red-hot stones, scorïæ, and ashes. On the 5th of August, the volcano was greatly agitated, a white sulphureous smoke, apparently four times the height and size of the volcano itself, issuing from the crater, at the same time that vast quantities of stones, &c. were thrown up to the supposed height of 2000 feet. The liquid lava, having cleared the rim of the crater, flowed down the sides of the mountain to the distance of four miles. The air was darkened by showers of reddish ashes, blended with long filaments of a vitrified matter resembling glass.

On the 7th, at midnight, a fountain of fire shot up from the crater to an incredible height, casting so bright a light that the smallest objects were clearly distinguishable at any place within six miles of the volcano. On the following evening, after a tremendous explosion, which broke the windows of the houses at Portici, another fountain of liquid fire rose to the surprising height of 10,000 feet, (nearly two miles,) while puffs of the blackest smoke accompanied the red-hot lava, interrupting its splendid brightness here and

there by patches of the darkest hue. The lava was partly directed by the wind towards Ottaiano, on which so thick a shower of ashes, blended with vast pieces of scorixæ, fell, that, had it been of longer continuance, that town would have shared the fate of Pompeii. It took fire in several places; and, had there been much wind, the inhabitants would have been burned in their houses, it being impossible for them to stir out. To add to the horror of the scene, incessant volcanic lightning darted through the black cloud which surrounded them, while the sulphureous smell and heat would scarcely allow them to draw their breath. In this dreadful state they remained nearly half an hour. The remaining part of the lava, still red hot and liquid, fell on the top of Vesuvius, and covered its whole cone, together with that of La Somma, and the valley between them, thus forming one complete body of fire, which could not be less than two miles and a half in breadth, and casting a heat to the distance of at least six miles around.

The eruption of 1794 is accurately described by the foregoing writer; but has not an equal degree of interest with the one already cited. We subjoin a few particulars, among which is a circumstance well deserving notice, as it leads to an estimate of the degree of heat in volcanoes. Sir William says

that, although the town of Torre del Greco was instantly surrounded with red-hot lava, the inhabitants saved themselves by coming out of the tops of their houses on the following day. It is evident, observes Mr Kirwan, that if this lava had been hot enough to melt even the most fusible stones, these persons must have been suffocated.

This eruption happened on the 15th of June, at ten o'clock at night, and was announced by a shock of an earthquake, which was distinctly felt at Naples. At the same moment a fountain of bright fire, attended with a very black smoke and a loud report, was seen to issue, and rise to a considerable height, from about the middle of the cone of Vesuvius. It was hastily succeeded by other fountains, fifteen of which were counted, all in a direct line, tending, for the space of about a mile and a half downward, towards the towns of Resina and Torre del Greco.—This fiery scene—this great operation of nature—was accompanied by the loudest thunder, the incessant reports of which, like those of a numerous heavy artillery, were attended by a continued hollow murmur, similar to that of the roaring of the ocean during a violent storm. Another blowing noise resembled that of the ascent of a large flight of rockets. The houses at Naples were for several hours in a constant tremor, the doors



and windows shaking and rattling incessantly, and the bells ringing. At this awful moment the sky, from a bright full moon and star-light, became obscured; the moon seemed eclipsed, and was soon lost in obscurity.—The murmur of the prayers and lamentations of a numerous population, forming various processions, and parading the streets, added to the horrors of the scene.

On the following day a new mouth was opened on the opposite side of the mountain, facing the town of Ottaiano: from this aperture a considerable stream of lava issued, and ran with great velocity through a wood, which it burnt: but stopped, after having run about three miles in a few hours, before it reached the vineyards and cultivated lands. The lava, which had flowed from several new mouths on the south side of the mountain, reached the sea, into which it ran after having overwhelmed, burnt, and destroyed the greater part of the Torre del Greco, through the centre of which it took its course. This town contained about 18,000 inhabitants, all of whom escaped, with the exception of about fifteen, who, through age or infirmity, were overwhelmed in their houses by the lava.—Its rapid progress was such, that the goods and effects were entirely abandoned.

It was ascertained some time after, that a considerable part of the crater had fallen in,

so as to have given a great extension to the mouth of Vesuvius, which was conjectured to be nearly two miles in circumference. This sinking of the crater was chiefly on the west side, opposite Naples, and, in all probability, occurred early in the morning of the 18th, when a violent shock of an earthquake was felt at Resina, and other places situated at the foot of the volcano. The clouds of smoke which issued from this now widely-extended mouth of Vesuvius were of such a density as to appear to force their passage with the utmost difficulty. One cloud heaped itself on another, and succeeding each other incessantly, they formed in a few hours such a gigantic and elevated column, of the darkest hue, over the mountain, as seemed to threaten Naples with immediate destruction, it having at one time been bent over the city, and appearing to be much too massive and ponderous to remain long suspended in the air.

From the above time until 1804, Vesuvius remained in a state of almost constant tranquillity. Symptoms of a fresh eruption had manifested themselves for several months, when at length, on the night of the 1. th of August, a deep roaring was heard at the Hermitage of Salvador, and the places adjacent to the mountain, accompanied by shocks of an earthquake which were sensibly felt at Resina, On the following morning, at noon,

a thick black smoke rose from the mouth of the crater, which, dilating prodigiously, covered the whole volcano. In the evening loud explosions were heard; and at Naples a column of fire was seen to rise from the aperture, carrying up stones in a state of complete ignition, which fell again into the crater. The noise by which these igneous explosions were accompanied resembled the roaring of the most dreadful tempest, and the whistling of the most furious winds; while the celerity with which the substances were ejected was such, that the first emission had not terminated when it was succeeded by a second.— Small monticules were at this time formed of a fluid matter, resembling a vitreous paste of a red colour, which flowed from the mouth of the crater; and these became more considerable in proportion as the matter accumulated.

In this state the eruption continued for several days the fire being equally intense, with frequent and dreadful noises. On the 28th, amid these fearful symptoms, another aperture, ejecting fire and stones situated behind the crater, was seen from Naples— The burning mass of lava which escaped from the crater on the following day was distinguished from *Terre del Greco*, having the appearance of a vitreous fluid, and advancing towards the base of the mountain between

the south and south-west. It reached the base on the 30th, having flowed from the aperture in less than twenty-four hours, a distance of 3,053 feet, while its mean breadth appeared to be about 350, but at the base 860 feet. In its course it divided into four branches, and finally reached a spot called the Guide's Retreat. Its entire progress to this point was more than a mile, so that, taking a mean proportion, this lava flowed at the rate of eighty-six feet an hour.

At the time of this eruption Kotzebue was at Naples. Vesuvius lay opposite to his window, and when it was dark he could clearly perceive in what manner the masses of fire rolled down the mountain. As long as any glimmering of light remained, that part of the mountain was to be seen, on the declivity of which the lava formed a straight but oblique line. As soon, however, as it was perfectly dark, and the mountain itself had vanished from the eye, it seemed as if a comet with a long tail stood in the sky. The spectacle was awful and grand!

He ascended the mountain on the morning succeeding the opening of a new gulf, and approached the crater as nearly as prudence would allow. From its centre ascended the sulphureous yellow cone which the eruption of this year had formed: on the other side a thick smoke perpetually arose



from the abyss opened during the preceding night. The side of the crater opposite to him, which rose considerably higher than that on which he stood, afforded a singular aspect; for it was covered with little pillars of smoke, which burst forth from it, and had some resemblance to extinguished lights.—The air over the crater was actually embodied, and was clearly to be seen in a tremulous motion. Below, it boiled and roared dreadfully, like the most violent hurricane; but occasionally a sudden deadly stillness ensued for some moments, after which the roaring recommenced with double vehemence, and the smoke burst forth in thicker and blacker clouds. It was, he observes, as if the spirit of the mountain had suddenly tried to stop the gulf, while the flames indignantly refused to endure the confinement.

It is remarkable that the great eruption of 1805 happened on the 12th of August, within a day of that of the preceding year.—Subterraneous noises had been previously heard, and a general apprehension of some violent commotion prevailing, the inhabitants of Torre del Greco and Annunciata had left their homes, through the apprehension of a shower of fire and ashes, similar to that which buried Pompeii. The stream of lava took the same course with that of 1794, described above, one of the arms following the direc-

tion of the great road, and rolling towards the sea. The stream soon divided again, and, spreading itself with an increased celerity, swept away many houses and the finest plantations. The other branch, at first, took the direction of Portici, which was threatened; but turning, and joining the preceding one, formed a sort of islet of boiling lava in the middle, both ending in the sea, and composing a promontory of volcanic matters. In the space of twenty minutes the whole extent of ground which the lava occupied was on fire, offering a terrible yet singular spectacle, as the burning trees presented the aspect of white flames, in contrast with those of the volcanic matters, which were red. The lava swept along with it enormous masses of whatever occurred in its course, and on its reaching the sea, nothing was to be seen or heard for a great extent of shore besides the boiling and hissing arising from the conflict of the water and fire.

The eruption of 1806, took place without any sensible indication, on the evening of the 31st of May, when a bright flame rose from the mountain to the height of about 600 feet, sinking and rising alternately, and affording so clear a light, that a letter might have been read at the distance of a league around the mountain. On the following morning, without any earthquake preceding, as had been

customary the volcano began to eject inflamm-  
 ed substances from three new mouths, pretty  
 near to each other, and about 650 feet from  
 the summit. The lava took the direction of  
 Torre del Greco and Annunciata, approach-  
 ing Portici, on the road leading from Naples  
 to Pompeii. Throughout the whole of the  
 2nd of June, a noise was heard, resembling  
 that of two armies engaged, when the dis-  
 charges of artillery and musketry are very  
 brisk. The current of lava now resembled a  
 wall of glass in a state of fusion, sparks and  
 flashes issuing from it from time to time,  
 with a powerful detonation. Vines, trees,  
 houses, — whatever objects, in short, it en-  
 countered on its way, were instantly over-  
 thrown or destroyed. In one part, where it  
 met with the resistance of a wall, it formed  
 a cascade of fire. In a few days, Portici, Re-  
 sina, and Torre del Greco, were covered with  
 ashes thrown out by the volcano; and, on the  
 ninth, the two former places were deluged  
 with a thick black rain, consisting of a species  
 of mud filled with sulphureous partic'es. On  
 the 1st of July, the ancient crater had wholly  
 disappeared, being filled with ashes and lava,  
 and a new one was formed in the eastern part  
 of the mountain, about 600 feet in depth,  
 and having about the same width at the open-  
 ing. Several persons, on the above day, de-  
 scended about half way down this new mouth,

and remained half an hour very near the flames, admiring the spectacle presented by the liquid lava, which bubbled up at the bottom of the crater, like the fused matter in a glass-house. This eruption continued until September, made great ravages, and was considered as one of the most terrible that had occurred in the memory of the inhabitants.

It now remains only to notice the late very recent eruptions which commenced on the 20th of October, about 12 o'clock. A dreadful internal noise was heard throughout the neighbourhood; the lava began to appear, and soon flowed in a torrent about a mile broad. The next day a second body of lava, half a mile in breadth, issued forth, and covered the old lava on the side of Bosco-Tre-Case; a third and fourth stream soon afterwards burst forth.

The following particulars of the progress of the eruption are from private letters:—

“*Naples, Oct. 23.*—You will have heard, my dear brother, before this reaches you, of the awfully grand eruption of Vesuvius.—Nothing similar has been witnessed since 1794, when the town of Torre del Greco, situated at about four miles from the crater, was partly destroyed. During the evening of the 21st, a little smoke appeared, and distinct reports of artillery, as it seemed, pro-



ceeded from that part of the bay. Had the sky not been perfectly serene, one would have considered it to be thunder. Towards nine o'clock, however, a little fire appeared at the old crater, and left us no longer in doubt about the cause of the intonations. At a few minutes past 11, it burst forth in all its fury, throwing out stones to a great height. In three hours afterwards, the lava rolled forth in two grand streams, one taking towards Resina, where the King's villa, called La Favorita, is situated, and the other inclining in a more southerly direction to Torre del Annunciata. The torrent of lava which flows towards Resina has already covered 100 acres of ground. The showers of ashes darken the sky, and fall even in the streets of the capital. The stones which have fallen at Bosco-Tre-Case have accumulated to the height of five palms. The eruptions of stones are frequent, and the sounds which issue from the mountain are frightful. All the people who lived near the volcano have fled. About 800 persons from the neighbouring villages have been received by order of the police and prefecture.

“ Oct. 25.—The fire seems to-day to be spent, but as the wind has changed to the south-east, or, as it is called Sirocco, the smoke and ashes have come over Naples, and the mountain, with Portici, and all along the

day, are invisible, while at mid-day torches are almost necessary, and umbrellas absolutely so. The King's villa at Resina was yesterday stripped of its furniture, and I may say that the whole line of coast, from Portici to Castel-a-Mar, has been abandoned, unless we expect the curious who flock in crowds to see what is passing. The eruption of cinders and smoke at this moment presents the appearance of a very thick and elevated black cone, which the wind blows towards Somma, Ottajano, and Nola. The number of individuals who fled from these villages augmented considerably yesterday. Last night about 2000 of these unfortunate persons received pecuniary assistance.

“*Oct 26.*—We expect that the eruption will soon entirely cease. The column of cinders and smoke are decreasing, and the detonations are less frequent and loud than heretofore. Most of the people who had fled are returning to their homes. It rained copiously last night, which has had the effect of purifying the atmosphere, which before was filled with clouds of black ashes. The summit of Vesuvius is visible, and it appears that the dreadful eruption which has taken place has torn away a part of the crest of the volcano.

“*Oct 28.*—This eruption is completely at an end; but violent explosions of cinders still

continue. The inhabitants of the Torre del Greco have suffered no other injury than what arises from their being in a great part covered with ashes and stones. A portion of the territory of Resina is covered with lava, but only where lava had formerly lain. The tower of the Annunciata has sustained injuries which it will not be easy either to estimate or repair. At Ottaiano, the fire has consumed 50 acres of Wood. These are all the details which have hitherto reached us."

The following additional particulars of this interesting event are contained in another private letter from Naples, dated October 29:—

"Vesuvius is comparatively quiet, but it still throws out immense columns of smoke, and the *lapillo* and fine ashes, continue to rain round the country according to the direction of the wind. Yesterday the wind blew over Naples, and it was a very rainy day. To my surprise, on going out, I found that the water which fell was of the colour of mud; indeed so thickly was it mixed with a shower of the fine volcanic ashes, that it has besmeared the houses and trees, and every thing exposed, in a most curious manner.

"The first stream of lava thrown out at the west side of the crater, was about half a mile in breadth; it passed between the hermitage of San Salvatore and the ruins of a

little country house belonging to the King, and descended towards Resina. After having damaged a considerable deal of land, it stopped at a spot called Il Monte.

“The second came out at the same time, and from the same mouth as the first; it was about two miles broad, and descended towards the village called Bosco di tre Case; but as it run over former lava, it did no injury.

“The third proceeded from a mouth that opened during this eruption low down the sides of the volcano; it ran towards the place called Il Monte, but it also flowing over old lava, did no injury. The second and third stopped nearly in the same place.

“The fourth and last descended from an old mouth called Vulcano, on the south side; reaching Pedementina, it joined itself with a smaller stream of lava; thence it ran on over old lava as far as the hollow called Atrio del Cavallo. It seemed to menace La Torre del Greco.

“It has been observed that the volcanic matter, not lava, thrown out by Vesuvius this time, taken in mass, is much more considerable than the lava itself.

“The damage done by the eruption is not so considerable as the dreadful and menacing appearances of the mountains would have induced me to imagine. Portici and the Torre del Greco have suffered no other inconveni-



ence than that arising from some sharp showers of *lapillo* and ashes. Resina has had about twenty *moggia* of land covered.— A *moggia* is a Neapolitan measure, equivalent to about four fifths of an English acre. From the Torre del Greco to the Torre del Annunciata, the road is now covered to the depth of two feet with *lapillo* and fine ashes. The Torre del Annunciata has suffered most; all its finely cultivated lands are covered with a very thick stratum of *lapillo* and ashes.— Near Ottaiano, about forty or fifty *moggia* of wood were consumed. Yesterday, this part suffered greatly from a deluge of warm water, mixed with ashes.

“ A great number of labourers, aided by Austrian and Neapolitan soldiers, are employed in clearing the roads. The heavy rains that are expected at this season will do much, but I fear that the country round the Torre del Annunciata will not be speedily restored to the industry of man.

“ The distance at which the fine ashes have fallen is astonishing; the master of an English vessel, which came in last Saturday, gathered them on the deck the Wednesday evening preceding, when he was off the Tuscan coast, at least two hundred miles from Naples.”

#### THE DOG OF MONTARGIS.

THE fame of an English bull-dog has

been deservedly transmitted to posterity by a monument in basso-relievo, which still remains on the chimney-piece of the grand hall, at the castle of Montargis, in France. The sculpture, which represents a dog fighting with a champion, is explained by the following narrative:—

Aubri de Mondidier, a gentleman of family and fortune, travelling alone through the forest of Bondi, was murdered, and buried under a tree. His dog, an English bull-dog, would not quit his master's grave for several days; till at length compelled by hunger, he proceeded to the house of an intimate friend of the unfortunate Aubri's, at Paris, and by his melancholy howling seemed desirous of expressing the loss they had both sustained. He repeated his cries, ran to the door, looked back to see if any one followed him, returned to his master's friend, pulled him by the sleeve, and with dumb eloquence entreated him to go with him.

The singularity of all these actions of the dog, added to the circumstance of his coming there without his master, whose faithful companion he had always been, prompted the company to follow the animal, who conducted them to a tree, where he renewed his howl, scratching the earth with his feet, significantly entreating them to search that particular spot. Accordingly, on digging, the

body of the unhappy Aubri was found.

Some time after, the dog accidentally met the assassin; who is styled, by all the historians that relate this fact. the Chevalier Macaire; when, instantly seizing him by the throat, he was with great difficulty compelled to quit his hold.

In short, whenever the dog saw the chevalier, he continued to pursue and attack him with equal fury. Such obstinate virulence in the animal, confined only to Macaire, appeared very extraordinary, especially to those who at once recollected the dog's remarkable attachment to his master, and several instances in which Macaire's envy and hatred to Aubri de Mondidier had been conspicuous.

Additional circumstances increased suspicion; and at length the affair reached the royal ear. The king (Louis VIII.) accordingly sent for the dog, who appeared extremely gentle till he perceived Macaire in the midst of several noblemen; when he ran fiercely towards him, growling at, and attacking, him as usual.

In those rude times, when no positive proof of a crime appeared, an order was issued for a combat between the accuser and the accused. These were denominated the Judgments of God, from a persuasion that heaven would much sooner work a miracle than suffer innocence to perish with infamy.

The king, struck with such a collection of circumstantial evidence against Macaire, determined to refer the decision to the chance of battle; in other words, he gave orders for a combat between the chevalier and the dog. The lists were appointed in the Isle of Notre Dame, then an unenclosed, uninhabited place; Macaire's weapon being a great cudgel.

The dog had an empty cask allowed for his retreat, to enable him to recover breath. Every thing being prepared, the dog no sooner found himself at liberty, than he ran round his adversary, avoiding his blows, and menaeing him on every side, till his strength was exhausted; then springing forward, he griped him by the throat, threw him on the ground, and obliged him to confess his guilt in the presence of the king and the whole court. In consequence of which the chevalier, after a few days, was convicted upon his own acknowledgement, and beheaded on a scaffold in the Isle of Notre Dame.

The above curious recital is translated from the *Memoires sur les Duels*, and is confirmed by many judicious critical writers; particularly Julius Scaliger and Montfaucon, neither of whom have ever been regarded as fabricators of idle stories. On this narrative the melo-drame of the *Forest of Bondi* is founded.