

IX. *Another Account of the same Eruption of Mount Vesuvius: In a Letter to Daniel Wray, Esq; F. R. S. from Sir Francis Haskins Eyles Stiles, Bart. F. R. S.*

Dear Sir,

Naples, 29th Dec. 1760.

Read Feb. 5,
1761.

ALL public exhibitions are prohibited for a few days, on account of the eruption of Vesuvius; and interest is making with the faint of the place, to protect the city from the mischiefs, which the mountain is supposed to be threatening us with. There is, indeed, a very extraordinary eruption at or near the foot of the mountain; but it bodes no evil to Naples in the opinion of any, but the very timorous, who take in all possibilities, and who are led to imagine, from this eruption at such a distance from the summit, that the soil, on which we stand, is not to be trusted. This new eruption began on the 23d instant: it was accompanied by a very extraordinary one at the summit, which I was an eye-witness of, from our own windows, about noon; and, I believe, this was a very few minutes after it happened. Mr. Lowther, and his companion Mr. Watson, were, at that time, climbing the mountain, and, with the Abbate Clemente their antiquary, and some rustic guides, were arrived within fifty yards of the summit, when it burst out. The flames, and the accended stones thrown up, were very terrible, by their account; some of the latter, as large as foot-balls, fell on their side; but the greater part fell on the other side the mountain.

V O L. LII.

G

The

The smoke only was visible from our windows, the flames being concealed within the smoke, and also overpowered by the brightness of the sunshine. But this smoke was a most glorious object: for it formed an upright column, of a very great thickness, at first; but sensibly increasing every moment, by fresh smoke, that we saw climbing the sides of the column, as if the interior part was too solid to admit it. The height of this column answered in proportion to the diameter, like that of a pillar in architecture. From this you may judge of the bulk of the appearance: the column supported its perpendicularity near a quarter of an hour, whether from the strength of the blast that threw it up, or from the resistance made by so great a body to the force of the wind; perhaps from both these causes; for the latter must be admitted as one, if we consider, that the power of the wind will only increase with the surface of the body to be moved, whereas the resistance will be as the mass. The upper part of this smoke was finely illumined, and variegated, by the sun; and when it began to unfold itself, it appeared just as Pliny has described the eruption, that destroyed the naturalist; that is, like a branching tree; to which comparison of his I may add this circumstance, that the creeping of the fresh smoke up the sides perfectly resembled the undulating motion of a nest of caterpillars, when climbing the trunk of some vegetable. This glorious sight, which is itself almost worth a journey from England, did not last long; for, in less than an hour, it diffused itself, blackening all the mountain, and a large portion of the sky; and when the wind had cleared the top of the mountain, which

which it did soon after, we observed the smoke ascending from it to be very moderate, though, if compared with that, which issued before the eruption, it might be said to be very considerable.

Thus far the summit: now for the foot, where we observed, at the same time, a double column of smoke, that we judged to be an eruption, and it proved to be a very great one. The flames, and the light of the stream of lava that issued from it, became visible after sunset. We went all of us the next morning (the 24th), to take a nearer view of the eruption; we took the great road to Salerno, and about ten miles from Naples, about mid-way between Torre del Greco and Torre del Annuntiata, we were stopped by the stream of lava, which had crossed the road, and was making for the sea. The mouths of the eruption were about a mile and half, or better, to our left, and were raging in a very frightful manner, as the noise of the explosions, which succeeded one another, at the interval of only a second or two, was equal to a storm of thunder. The flames were very bright, after it was dark; and the accended stones, which were thrown up in vast quantities at every explosion, resembled the springing of a mine, as they call it, in a fire-work. We staid an hour or two, in the night, on the spot, to behold this sight. These mouths of fire still continue to play; but the lava has not yet reached the sea, though it was said to be within half a mile of it, when we were there. A small rising of the ground before it has obliged it to spread in breadth, and its progress for the shore is very slow: perhaps it may not reach it, if the eruption continues, but may, by the level of the ground,

be determined to some other direction. The mouths are said to have been fourteen in all at first, afterwards reduced to eight, and now, I believe, much fewer. There are three hillocks, large enough to be distinguished at Naples, that are formed by the stones and matter thrown up at these mouths, and one of them is already a young mountain. Some imagine the eruption will last many months, as the lower eruptions have generally lasted longest; and this, I think, is a great deal lower than any that ever happened.

F. H. Eyles Stiles.

X. *Extract of a Letter from Mr. Robert Mackinlay, to the Right Hon. the Earl of Morton, F. R. S. dated at Rome, the 9th January 1761. concerning the late Eruption of Mount Vesuvius, and the Discovery of an antient Statue of Venus at Rome.*

Read Feb. 19, 1761. **T**HERE has been a most terrible eruption lately of mount Vesuvius, about the latter end of last month, but the accounts hitherto arrived are not very distinct: however, they all agree, that there were nine new mouths, or openings, towards the Torre del Greco and Annonciada: that very considerable shocks of an earthquake were felt all over Naples: that neither fire nor smoke came out of the old crater: that the lava had run into the
sea: