

whole island, being beds of *surturbrand*, or bituminous wood, in which occur leaves, trunks, and branches of trees, with clay and ferruginous earth. These strata support alternating beds of basalt, tufa, and lava, which form the summit of the hill in which the vegetable remains occur. The Geysers, of which there are a considerable number, are springs, or rather intermittent fountains of hot water, which issue from crevices in the lava. A fountain of boiling water, accompanied with a great evolution of vapour, first appears, and is ejected to a considerable height; a volume of steam succeeds, and is thrown up with great force, and a terrific noise like that produced by the escape of steam from the boiler of an engine. This operation continues sometimes for more than an hour; an interval of repose of uncertain duration succeeds, after which the same phenomena are repeated. If stones are thrown into the mouth of the cavity, from which the fountain has issued, they are ejected with violence, after a short interval, and again jets of boiling water, vapour, and steam appear in succession. The eruptions of the "great Geyser," witnessed by Sir G. S. Mackenzie,* were preceded by a sound like the distant discharge of heavy ordnance, and the ground shook sensibly; the sound was rapidly repeated, when the water in the basin, after heaving several times, suddenly rose in a large column,

* Travels in Iceland, in the summer of the year 1810, by Sir George Steuart Mackenzie, Bart.