

place in every geological epoch, were equally manifest; the foci of volcanic action were found to have varied, but throughout the cycle of physical changes contemplated by geology, the volcano and the earthquake appeared to have been in active operation.

The present grand European centre of volcanic action is in southern Italy, which has for ages been in a state of energy; Etna, Vesuvius, and the Lipari isles, being the vents through which its incandescent materials have escaped. The influence of its fires on the calcareous rocks of the Apennines evolved the carbonic acid of the waters, which deposited the travertine of Pæstum, Solfatara, &c. previously described (page 60).*

12. VESUVIUS.—The celebrated mountain of Vesuvius, or Somma, is about four thousand feet high, and its summit is now broken and irregular; but when northern Italy was first colonized by the Greeks, “its cone was of a regular form, with a flattish summit, where the remains of an ancient crater, nearly filled up, had left a slight depression, covered in its interior by wild vines, and with a sterile plain at the bottom.” From the earliest period to which tradition refers, to the first century of the christian era, this mountain had exhibited no appearance of activity, but we then arrive at a crisis in the volcanic action of this district, which gave

* Consult Mr. Lyell's admirable description of modern volcanoes and their effects. Principles of Geology, vol. ii.