

Sir William Hamilton has given us two original letters describing this eruption. The first, by Falconi, dated 1538, contains the following passages.* “It is now two years since there have been frequent earthquakes at Puzzuoli, Naples, and the neighbouring parts. On the day and in the night before the eruption (of Monte Nuovo), above twenty shocks, great and small, were felt. The eruption began on the 29th of September, 1538. It was on a Sunday, about one o'clock in the night, when flames of fire were seen between the hot baths and Tripergola. In a short time the fire increased to such a degree, that it burst open the earth in this place, and threw up so great a quantity of ashes and pumice stones, mixed with water, as covered the whole country. The next morning (after the formation of Monte Nuovo) the poor inhabitants of Puzzuoli quitted their habitations in terror, covered with the muddy and black shower which continued the whole day in that country—flying from death, but with death painted in their countenances. Some with their children in their arms, some with sacks full of their goods; others leading an ass, loaded with their frightened family, towards Naples; others carrying quantities of birds, of various sorts, that had fallen dead at the beginning of the eruption; others, again, with fish which they had found, and which were to be met with in plenty on the shore, the sea having left them dry for a considerable time. I accompanied Signor Moramaldo to behold the wonderful effects of the eruption. The sea had retired on the side of Baiæ, abandoning a considerable tract, and the shore appeared almost entirely dry, from the quantity of ashes and broken pumice stones thrown up by the eruption. I saw two springs in the newly discovered ruins; one before the house that was the queen's, of hot and salt water,” &c.

So far Falconi: the other account is by Pietro Giacomo di Toledo, which begins thus:—“It is now two years since this province of Campagna has been afflicted with earthquakes, the country about Puzzuoli much more so than any other parts: but the 27th and the 28th of the month of September last, the earthquakes did not cease day or night in the town of Puzzuoli: that plain which lies between Lake Avernus, the Monte Barbaro, and the sea, was *raised a little*, and many cracks were made in it, from some of which issued water; at the same time the sea, immediately adjoining the plain, *dried up about two hundred paces*, so that the fish were left on the sand a prey to the inhabitants of Puzzuoli. At last, on the 29th of the same month, about two o'clock in the night, the earth opened near the lake, and discovered a horrid mouth, from which were vomited furiously smoke, fire, stones, and mud, composed of ashes, making at the time of its opening a noise like the loudest thunder. The stones which followed were by the flames converted to pumice, and some of these were *larger than an ox*. The stones went about as high as a cross-bow can carry, and then fell down, sometimes on the edge, and sometimes into the mouth itself. The mud was of the colour of ashes,

* Campi Phlegræi, p. 70.