

In flowing down a declivity, it had divided itself into three streams ; one directing its course towards St. Maria del Pagliano, another towards Resina, and a third towards La Torre.

During the whole of this time the mountain was greatly convulsed, and deep hollow sounds were heard, which, together with the impetuous ejection of the lava, shook the mountain itself to the very base. When the oscillatory motion of the mountain ceased, the sounds became less frequent, but more distinct ; the lava flowed more abundantly, and the action seemed as though it were suffering under the last paroxysm of its dying energies. This was about four o'clock in the morning of the 16th, and at that time the intumescent mass had spread itself through all the streets of Torre del Greco, and from thence had flowed into the sea, covering its bed 362 feet beyond the margin of the water, the current having a breadth of 1127 feet. The distance from the point of ejection to the place where its progress was arrested was 12,961 feet.

During the progress of the eruption the summit of Vesuvius was perfectly quiescent, and no remarkable phenomenon was observed round the crater. But towards the dawn of day, the heights of the mountain were hidden by a dense cloud of comminuted sand, which, spreading itself, in a short time covered the whole country, and the sun was darkened by an impenetrable mantle of clouds.

It is impossible to describe the horrors of that night, in which Vesuvius poured out its terrible fury on the beautiful valley beneath it. The fiery ejections, and the inexpressible groans of the mountain, the death-like stillness of the atmosphere, and the cries of the thousands who had been driven from their homes and all the pleasures of life, must together have presented a combination of terrors which no imagination can realize.

But, it was not on the western side only that lava was ejected ; there was an active crater on the eastern ; and the stream which flowed from it filled the valley of Torienta, which was 65 feet wide, 120 feet deep, and 1627 feet long. From this valley it took its way into the plain of Forte, where, like the western stream, it divided into three branches, which severally took their courses towards Bosco, Mauro, and the plains of Mulara. This current was not above half so large as that which flowed from the western side.