

extinct crater, then overgrown with trees and shrubs, that Spartacus, with his army of gladiators and fugitive slaves, encamped, in B.C. 72, before his victory over Clodius Glabrus and the Roman legions.*

The first recorded eruption of Vesuvius is, in some respects, the most memorable. It took place in A.D. 79, on the 24th of August, and destroyed the cities of Herculaneum, Pompeii, and Stabiæ. Forewarning of it had been given in A.D. 63, when Pompeii and Herculaneum suffered severely from an earthquake. But they had begun to rebuild their shattered edifices when the more terrible catastrophe occurred.

Its incidents have been minutely described by the younger Pliny,† whose uncle,

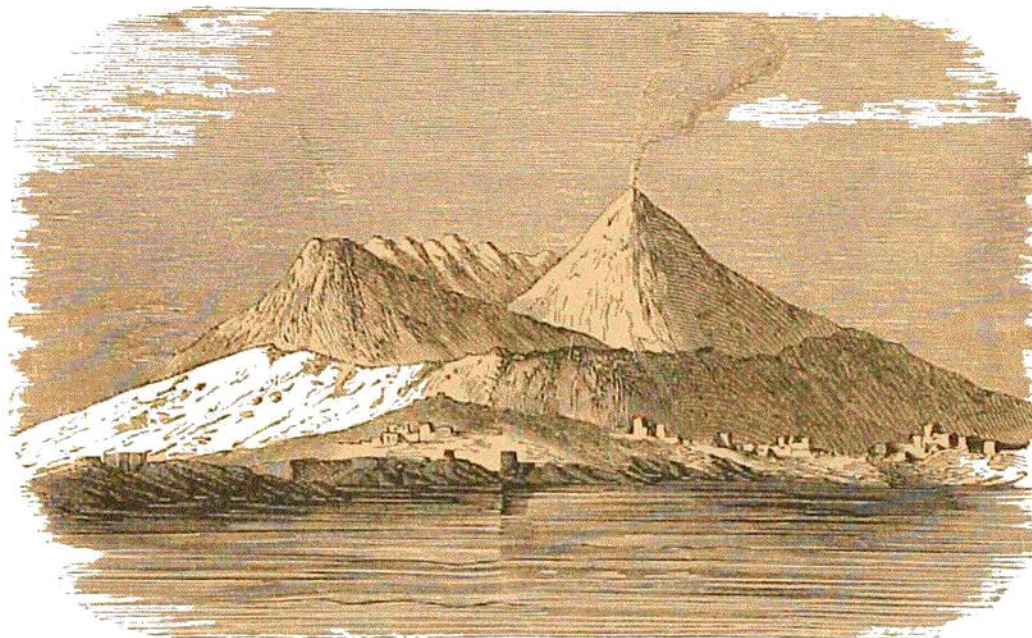


FIG. 142.—VESUVIUS AFTER THE ERUPTION OF A. D. 79.

the author of the "Historia Naturalis," was one of the victims. He particularly notices the phenomenon of a huge cloud of smoke and vapour, which rose above the mountain, and which he compares to a pine-tree, shooting up to a great height like a trunk, and extending itself at the top into a canopy of branches. He also alludes to the darkness which prevailed; the incessant showers of cinders, pumice-stones, and black pieces of burning rock; to the noisome exhalations and suffocating gases which filled the air; the electric flashes that occasionally lit up the scene; the agitation of ocean, and violent oscillations of the earth;—in a word, we may gather from his narrative the principal features of a volcanic eruption. Pompeii was overwhelmed by showers of calcined pumice-stone, or lapilli, and by vast streams of water and wet sand, which thickened into a species of volcanic paste. Herculaneum owed its destruction to the torrents of volcanic mud, which rolled over the

* ["Florus," lib. iii., c. 20.] † [Pliny, "Epist.," (ad Tacitum), lib. vi. 16, 20.]