

the most death-like stillness to the grandest exhibition of force it is possible to conceive. Instead of the monotonous dull black of congealed lava on the lower levels, you have the deep brick-red of stones that have been under the action of fire, the brightest vermilion, and every imaginable shade of orange and yellow that sulphur-deposits are capable of taking. The ground is hot too ; so hot, indeed, that you cannot keep your foot on the same spot for many seconds together. Between the chinks of the stones you can see that a few inches below the surface it is actually red-hot. You thrust in the end of your stick for a moment, and pull it out charred.

“ Over all the further half of the crater there hangs a dense cloud of smoke and vapour ; all around you there is an atmosphere of sulphur which sets you coughing ; from numberless small holes about your feet there issue with a hiss sulphurous jets of steam, which nearly choke you as you pass over them ; and then, as you look down into the actual abyss, you are face to face with the most appalling phenomena both of sight and sound which perhaps the whole of Europe has to offer.

“ Amongst the crowd of strange sensations that are experienced at such a time, the phenomena of sound are perhaps the most wonderful of all. What meets the ear is, if anything, even more terrific than what meets the eye. Even to sight the eruption is not exactly what the imagination paints it beforehand. It does not consist, as the pictures necessarily lead one to suppose, of a *continuous shower* at all. Still less does it consist of a continuous shower of black ashes shot out from a fire blazing on the top of the mountain : it is rather a series of explosions. But the roar and glare of the great abyss is continuous. You look into the pit, and though you see no actual flame, yet its sides are in a state of constant incandescence ; from the mouth of it there roars up incessantly a dense cloud of steam ; and in the depths of it below you hear the noise of preparation for the outburst that is next to come. Then you hear a sharper crackle, and then without further warning follows a loud explosion, which shoots into the air a torrent of white-hot missiles of every shape and size. So enormous are the forces at work that not only small pieces of stone and sulphur, such as you might carry away as mementoes of your visit, but huge blocks of mineral, each enough to load a railway ballast-waggon, and all in a state of perfectly white heat, are tossed up as though they were so many cricket-balls. The explosion lasts, perhaps, no longer than a minute ; and then there is a cessation of some seconds, with the noise only of internal preparation once more, after which the explosion is repeated. So it goes on again and again, as long as the eruption continues.

“ The noise that accompanies the projection of these enormous missiles, which from below seem to be shot up in profound silence, is something quite without a parallel in ordinary experience. One of our party said he had been shipwrecked three times, and the crash of the waves against the timbers of a helpless ship was one of the most terrible accompaniments of such scenes ; yet that was nothing to the almost stupefying din that was going on before us—moments when the daylight was over, and the world below could no longer be distinguished—when we had nothing but the clear starlight overhead, and were truly alone with the mountain ; when the varied colouring of the ground had disappeared in the darkness, and nothing could be seen but the gleam of the burning earth through the chinks at our feet ; while the