

“ The watery volume trembling to the sky,
Burst down, a dreadful deluge from on high ! ”

Sir Pulteney Malcolm, when navigating the same waters on the 28th of June, had seen nothing ; but experienced some smart submarine shocks, as if his ship had touched a sandbank.

While the volcanic jet was rising in the midst of the waters, the inhabitants of the Sicilian coast remained undisturbed, though a thick fog shrouded their horizon. But on the 12th of July, the population of Sciacca felt that the air was impregnated with a strong odour of sulphurous acid, and saw floating on the waves a quantity of small, black, and very porous scorïæ, which, driven ashore by the breeze, formed a stratum four inches thick. The fishermen's boats with difficulty made their way through the volcanic débris and dead fish swirling on the surface of the water.

On the following day was witnessed the apparition out at sea of a column of smoke which, like the guiding beacon of the Israelites, became at night a pillar of fire. It was visible all day ; at intervals loud reports were heard ; and during the night flashes of brilliant lightning played athwart the dense cloud of smoke and vapour.

On the 18th of July, Captain Corrao discovered, at the same point of disturbance, an island 10 to 14 feet in height, with a central crater, whence issued volcanic discharges and volumes of vapour. The crater of the volcano had gradually arisen, and had terminated by creating an island with its accumulated discharges. The scorïæ which covered the sea all around the new volcanic island were of a chocolate colour ; the waters boiling in the circular basin of the crater, of a reddish tint.

On the same day, a small English bark, dispatched by Vice-Admiral Hotham, then commanding-in-chief in the Mediterranean, estimated the elevation of the island at 80 feet, and its circumference at 4500 feet : the sea poured into the interior basin through a profound gap.

The eruption continued with great violence until the end of July. At that time it was visited by Captain Swinburne, and by Hoffmann, the eminent Prussian geologist, who devoted himself to the special study of volcanoes, and to whom geology is indebted for some valuable observations *de visu* on this class of phenomena.

It was with considerable difficulty Hoffmann prevailed on the fishermen of Sciacca to carry him into the neighbourhood of the volcanic island. So great, and, moreover, so natural was their terror in presence of the violent character of the eruption, which he proposed to confront in a frail fishing-boat, that Hoffmann could only persuade them to put to sea by making, in case of death, certain legacies and testamentary dispositions in their favour, and by promising them an exorbitant remuneration. Conquered by his munificence, the fishers equipped a boat for an exploration of the insular volcano.

It was more distant than they had supposed, and it was not until after a long night's sail Hoffmann, on the 24th of July, approached the island, within the distance of about a quarter of a league. It was impossible to draw nearer. Burning scoria rained down upon the boat, which the extraordinary agitation of the waves prevented from advancing. Hoffmann, however, was sufficiently near for all scientific purposes.