

—an interesting observation in connection with some events in the recent history of this volcanic district.¹

The philosopher Seneca, besides the treatises and plays by which he is chiefly known, wrote towards the end of his life a tract in which, under the title of *Natural Questions*, he discoursed largely of the heavenly bodies and of meteorological phenomena, and discussed also, more fully than any previous writer whose work has come down to us, some of the more important geological processes of nature. He was born a few years before the commencement of our era and met his tragic fate in A.D. 65. As the tract in question refers to events which had happened some time before, in the spring of A.D. 63, it is probably his latest work. Seneca appears to have been familiar with all the literature of the subject up to his own time, and he quotes and criticises the opinions of many of his predecessors. Especially interesting are his disquisitions on the flow of water at the surface and below ground, and on the results and origin of earthquakes. From his treatment of these matters he can be seen to have been a shrewd observer and sagacious reasoner, though still unable to advance much beyond the opinions prevalent in his day, and still holding to some of the most erroneous popular beliefs. Yet he clearly recognized that the system of Nature is no capricious series of events, liable at any moment to be interrupted and changed by the fiat of some irascible divinity. "Though the processes below ground," he remarks, "are more hidden from us than those on the surface

¹ vi. ii. 11.