

calcined, and vitrified matters which the mountain throws out, is so great, that they destroy cities and forests, cover fields an hundred and two hundred feet in thickness, and sometimes form hills and mountains, which are only heaps of these matters piled up together. The action of this fire, and the force of its explosion, is so violent, that it produces by its re-action, succussions which shake the earth, agitate the sea, overthrow mountains, and destroy the most solid towers and edifices, even to very considerable distances.

These effects, although natural, have been looked upon as prodigies; and although we see in miniature, by fire, effects nearly similar to those of volcanos, yet there is something in grandeur, of whatever nature it may be, that invariably strikes the imagination and influences the mind, and therefore I am not surprised that some authors have taken them for the vents of a central fire, and ignorant people for the mouths of Hell. Astonishment produces fear, and fear is the mother of superstition. The natives of Iceland imagine the roarings of the volcano are the cries of the damned, and its eruptions the effects of the rage of devils, and the despair of the wretched.