

these things enable us to realize the supposition just made respecting the Romans, and oblige us to say, that all these structures were the work of unknown races of men, on whose history even tradition sheds not a ray of light.

It is easy to make the case still stronger. When, in 1738, the workmen, in excavating a well, struck upon the theatre of Herculaneum, which had reposed, for seventeen centuries, beneath the lava of Vesuvius; when, subsequently, (1750,) Pompeii was disencumbered of its volcanic ashes and cinders, and thus two cities were brought to light; had history been quite silent respecting their existence, as it was respecting their destruction;* would not all observers say, and have not all actually said,—here are the works of man, his temples, his forums, his amphitheatres, his tombs, his shops of traffic and of arts, his houses, furniture, pictures, and personal ornaments, his streets, with their pavements and wheel-marks, worn in the solid stone, his coins, his grinding mills, his very wine and food, his dungeons, with skeletons of the prisoners chained in their awful solitudes, and here and there a victim, who, although at liberty, was overtaken by the fiery storm.

Because the soil had formed, and grass and trees had grown, and successive generations of men had unconsciously walked, toiled, or built their houses, over the entombed cities; and because they were covered by lava or cinders, does any one hesitate to admit, that they were once real cities, that they stood upon what was then the upper surface, that their streets once rang with the noise of business, and their halls and theatres with the voice of pleasure; and that, in an evil hour, they were overwhelmed by the eruptions of Vesuvius, and their name and place blotted out from the earth and forgotten.

All this is legibly read by every observer, and all agree in the conclusions to be drawn. When moreover, the traveller of the present day sees the cracks in the walls of the houses of Pompeii, and observes that some of them have been thrown out of the perpendicular and have been pointed, and plastered, and shored up with props, he learns, that the fatal convulsion was not the first, and that the doomed towns, must have been before shaken on their foundations, by the throes of the laboring earth.

To establish all this, it is of no decisive importance that scholars have gleaned, here and there, a fragment from ancient Roman classics,

* In the histories of those times, it is only said, in general terms, that cities and villages were overwhelmed.