

and scoriform trachytic lava, of recent aspect, resting upon the strata of loose tuff which covers the principal mass of trachyte.*

Volcanic eruption in Ischia, 1302. — The other occurrence is well authenticated, — the eruption, in the year 1302, of a lava-stream from a new vent on the south-east end of the Island of Ischia. During part of 1301, earthquakes had succeeded one another with fearful rapidity; and they terminated at last with the discharge of a lava-stream from a point named the Campo del Arso, not far from the town of Ischia. This lava ran quite down to the sea — a distance of about two miles: in colour it varies from iron grey to reddish black, and is remarkable for the glassy felspar which it contains. Its surface is almost as sterile, after a period of five centuries, as if it had cooled down yesterday. A few scantlings of wild thyme, and two or three other dwarfish plants, alone appear in the interstices of the scoriæ, while the Vesuvian lava of 1767 is already covered with a luxuriant vegetation. Pontanus, whose country-house was burnt and overwhelmed, describes the dreadful scene as having lasted two months.† Many houses were swallowed up, and a partial emigration of the inhabitants followed. This eruption produced no cone, but only a slight depression, hardly deserving the name of a crater, where heaps of black and red scoriæ lie scattered around. Until this eruption, Ischia is generally believed to have enjoyed an interval of rest for about seventeen centuries; but Julius Obsequens‡, who flourished A. D. 214, refers to some volcanic convulsions in the year 662 after the building of Rome (91 B. C.). As Pliny, who lived a century before Obsequens, does not enumerate this among other volcanic eruptions, the statement of the latter author is supposed to have been erroneous; but it would be more consistent, for reasons before stated, to disregard the silence of Pliny, and to conclude that some kind of subterranean commotion, probably of no great violence, happened at the period alluded to.

History of Vesuvius after 1138. — To return to Vesuvius: — the next eruption occurred in 1306; between which era and 1631 there was only one other (in 1500), and that a slight one. It has been remarked, that throughout this period Etna was in a state of such unusual activity, as to lend countenance to the idea that the great Sicilian volcano may sometimes serve as a channel of discharge to elastic fluids and lava that would otherwise rise to the vents in Campania.

Formation of Monte Nuovo, 1538. — The great pause was also marked by a memorable event in the Phlegræan Fields — the sudden formation of a new mountain in 1538, of which we have received authentic accounts from contemporary writers.

The height of Monte Nuovo has recently been determined, by the Italian mineralogist Pini, to be 440 English feet above the level of the bay; its base is about eight thousand feet, or more than a mile and a

* Geol. Trans., second series, vol. ii. p. 346.

† Lib. vi. de Bello Neap. in Grævii Thesaur.

‡ Prodig. libel. c. cxiv.