

of Earth ; his head reached to the stars, and his arms embraced the rising and the setting sun. With his hands he hurled the rocks to the highest heavens ; fire gleamed from his eyes, and liquid fire boiled in his mouth. He is said to have been born in Cilicia, which is known to be a volcanic district ; and having, shortly after his birth, frightened the gods from heaven, he was pursued by Jupiter to the borders of the lake Serbonis, another volcanic district, and was at last imprisoned in the Island of Sicily, where he still continues to rave, shaking the earth with his groans, and ejecting liquid fire.

The philosophical opinion of the ancient Greeks and Romans, if such we may call it, as standing in opposition to the fable by which the uninitiated were imposed upon, is stated by the Roman poet Lucretius, in his *De Rerum Naturâ*. Volcanoes were supposed to derive their origin from the conversion of the air confined in the cavities of the earth into violent winds by heat, which, generating an increased temperature, inflamed the combustible bodies contained in the bowels of the earth.

This theory is nothing more philosophical than the popular fable, and far less poetical. But it is not surprising that such a theory as this obtained currency among the ancients, for they were almost entirely ignorant of those facts upon which an explanation must be founded, and indeed of many of the effects of the causes they sought. The phenomena which accompany eruption preventing a direct examination of the cause, opinions must be formed from the circumstances under which the effect is produced, the extent of the influence, and the character of the ejected mass. With all these the ancients were unacquainted, and even our own knowledge is inferior to our opportunities.

Werner was among the first of the geologists who ventured to propose a theory of volcanic action. He attributed eruption to the ignition of coal and other inflammable substances ; and, in support of this hypothesis, Pallas states, that the ejection of mud by the cones near the Cimmerian Bosphorus was occasioned by the combustion of the coal measures. Brieslak proposed to improve the theory, by attributing volcanic phenomena to the ignition of petroleum by sulphuric and phosphoric acids ; and, in support of his theory, adduces the presence of these substances in lava. As it would be