

1500 feet an hour ; towards its termination it advanced only a few yards in several days. Its surface became speedily encrusted with slag—as generally happens to lava-streams—which was continually being broken and re-cemented, as the under-current of the incandescent river moved slowly forward. An attempt was made to divert its course from Catania by breaking through the incrustation, and a small stream began to flow off at the side ; but as the main stream would have overwhelmed Paterno had it followed this direction, its inhabitants resisted the attempt by force, and, as already narrated, the lava-flood continued to advance upon Catania.

Mompilière was one of the towns destroyed on this occasion, and in 1704, when some excavations were made on the spot, a portion of its principal church was found uninjured, as if it had been embedded in the lava, and swept away by it. The loss of life by this eruption was very terrible, and the country around Etna was ravaged for many miles, as if it had been harried by a victorious army.

In the eruption of 1811 a curious feature was noticeable. A stream of lava burst from the side of the cone a little below the summit, but speedily ceased to flow. Immediately, a second vent was opened on a lower level. In due succession a third was formed—a fourth, a fifth, a sixth, and, finally, a seventh—all in the same vertical direction, indicating that a great perpendicular fissure had been formed in the side of the cone.

In 1819, near the point where the first lava's mouth was opened in 1811, three large vents or apertures simultaneously formed, with loud explosions, and a glare of fire and flame, and incessant discharges of hot cinders and sand. Ere long another mouth was opened lower down, with similar accompaniments ; and still lower down a fifth, whence poured a vast river of lava into the Val del Bove. During the first forty-eight hours it progressed nearly four miles. Then the three original vents fell in, and formed one vast crater, from which, and from the other two mouths below, a huge flood of lava rolled headlong into the same valley, and pouring through it, fell over the precipice at its termination in a cascade of fire and smoke and vapour, and with a roar as of thunder, arising from the breaking up of the solid crust and the collision of the falling fragments.

A great eruption occurred in 1852. Two new mouths opened in a ravine called the Val de Leone, and after ejecting vast showers of ashes and stone, and clouds of ammoniacal vapours, poured forth two currents of lava. After these had continued flowing for a considerable time, their pressure broke down the barrier between the two mouths, and threw them into one vast chasm, whence the lava rushed in an augmented volume, shivering the rock into fragments, and hurling them into the air to a great height. In the huge cloud of ashes and vapour which overhung the glaring abyss, electric flashes shot to and fro continuously, and peals of thunder were reverberated in every echoing recess. The lava-river attained an extreme breadth of about two miles, and a maximum depth of 160 feet ; and as it spread over a considerable extent of richly cultivated country, the ruin which it caused was immense.

The eruption of 1865 was marked by the same phenomenon as that of 1811 ; namely, the formation of seven new craters, in a perpendicular line of descent from the summit—the highest being situated 5578 feet above the sea-level.