

The next great central volcano of Europe, and one which may justly be designated classical, is

#### VESUVIUS.

Its early history presents some peculiar features. From the original colonization of Southern Italy by the Greeks down to the first century of the Christian era, a period of several hundred years, Vesuvius afforded no other indications of its volcanic character than such as the naturalist might reasonably infer from the analogy of its structure to other volcanoes. These characteristics were recognized by Strabo, but Pliny saw no reason to include Vesuvius in his list of active vents.\* The volcanic forces of the district at this time were manifested at other points, which have now, in their turn, become quiescent. Terrific convulsions took place at irregular intervals in Pithecusa (the modern Ischia), and seem to have spread as far as Prochyta (Procida), which, according to Strabo and Pliny, was made an island by being violently separated from Ischia. To a subsequent eruption of Monte Epomeo, in Ischia, is ascribed the formation of the cone and crater of Monte Rotaro, now covered with arborescent shrubs, and a vegetation no less vigorous than beautiful; and of the promontory of Zaro and Caruso.†

The Solfatara, near Puzzuoli, which may be described as a nearly extinguished crater, seems, from the accounts of ancient writers, to have existed before the Christian era in very much the same condition as at present, continuously ejecting aqueous vapour, and sulphureous and muriatic acid gases. It broke into active eruption in 1198.

It is also evident that Lake Avernus, a circular basin near Puzzuoli, about two miles in circumference, four feet above the sea-level, and 250 feet in depth, formerly exhaled mephitic vapours of a volcanic character. As it lies embosomed among lofty hills, which were formerly clothed with dense forests, the escape of these

\* [Sir C. Lyell, "Principles of Geology," bk. ii., c. 24.]

† [Ischia was disturbed by earthquakes, however, in 1801; in 1802, when an eruption of lava took place; and, more recently, in 1828.]