

and volcanic action, it is the structure and products of such mountains as Etna and Vesuvius that are present to his mind. Nowhere over the whole surface of the globe have eruptions been witnessed different in kind from those of the Mediterranean vents, though varying greatly in degree. And hence even among those who have specially devoted themselves to the study of volcanoes there has been a tacit assumption that from the earliest times and in all countries of the world where volcanic outbreaks have occurred, it has been from local vents like those of Etna, the Æolian Islands, the Phlegræan Fields, or the Greek Archipelago.

If one were to assert that this assumption is probably erroneous, that the type of volcanic "cones and craters" has not been in every geological age and all over the earth's surface the prevalent one; that, on the contrary, it is the less portentous, though possibly always the more frequent type of volcanic action, and belongs perhaps to a feebler or waning degree of volcanic excitement—these statements would be received by most European geologists with incredulity, if not with some more pronounced form of dissent. Yet I am convinced that they are well founded, and that a striking illustration of their truth is supplied by the greatest of all the episodes in the volcanic history of Europe, that of the basalt-plateaux of the north-west.

It is now some twelve years since Richthofen pointed out that on the Pacific slope of North America there is evidence of the emission of vast floods of lava without the formation of cones and craters. Geologists interested in these matters may remember with what destructive energy Scrope reviewed that writer's *Natural System of Volcanic Rocks*; how he likened it to the old crude notions that had been in vogue in his own younger days, and which a