

he declares, must be full of wind-swept caverns, with lakes, rivers, chasms and cliffs, as above ground. The fall of some of these vast mountainous rocks, undermined by time, gives such a shock as to send gigantic tremors far and wide through the earth. Again, wind, collecting in these subterranean cavernous spaces, presses with such enormous force against the walls towards which it rushes as to make the earth lean over to that side, and to topple down buildings above ground. Sometimes the air, either from outside or from within, sweeps with terrific whirling violence into the vacant spaces underneath, until in its fury it cleaves for itself a yawning chasm in the earth by which it escapes to the daylight. Even when it does not issue at the surface, its violence among the many underground passages sends a tremor through the earth.

The poet stating that he will explain how volcanic eruptions, such as those of Etna, arise, declares that the mountain is hollow within and that the wind and air inside, when thoroughly heated and raging furiously, heat the rocks around. Fire is thus struck out from these rocks and with its swift flames is swept by the air up the chasms, until it issues from the mountain-top, hurling forth ashes, huge stones, and black smoke. From the sea-floor caverns reach down into the depths of the mountain, and the water that enters there, mingled with air, rushes out again in blasts of flame with showers of stones and clouds of sand.¹ We are not definitely told, however, by what process the heat inside is engendered, whether the explanation

¹ *De Rerum Natura*, vi. 535-702.