

The Mirror

OF

LITERATURE, AMUSEMENT, AND INSTRUCTION.

No. XXXIII.]

SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 1823.

[Price 2*d.*

Destruction of Torre del Greco.



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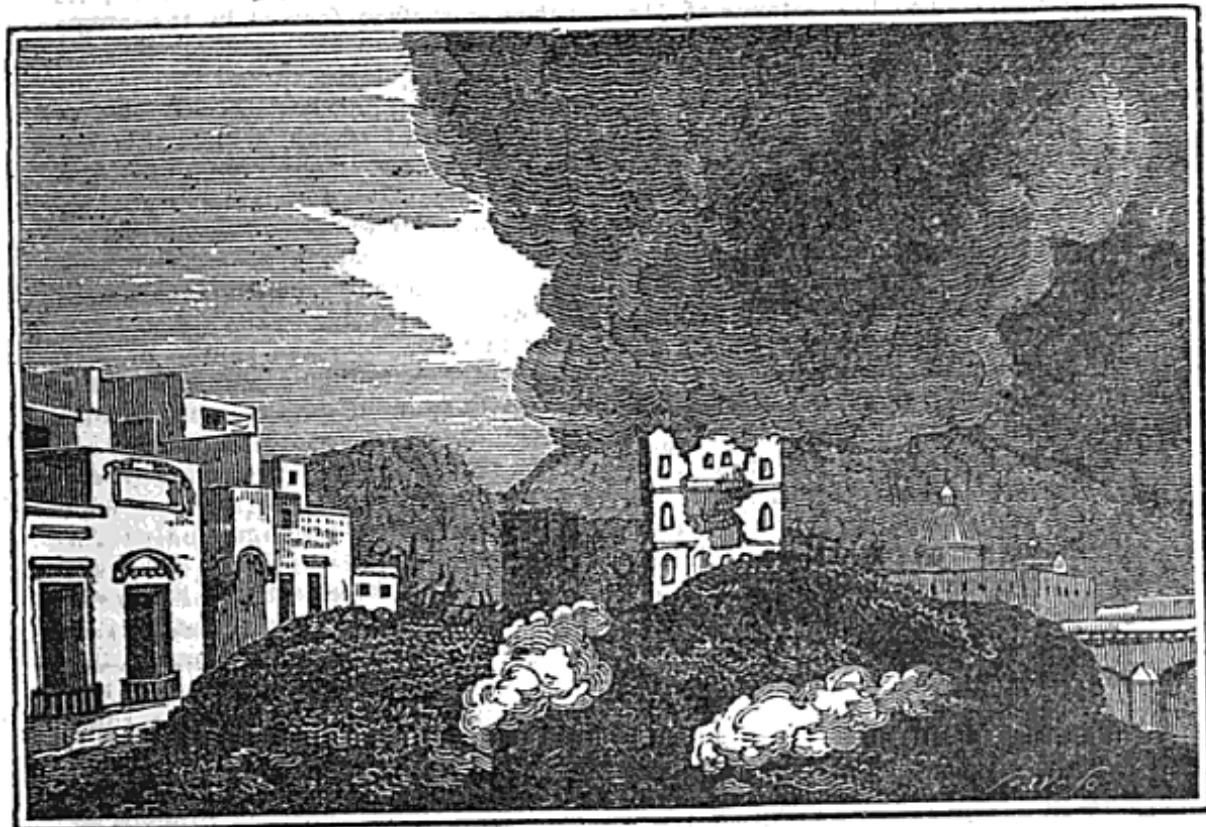
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[PRICE 2d.

Destruction of Torre del Greco.



OUR Engraving this week presents a faithful representation of the City of Torre del Greco, after its almost total destruction by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in 1794. The drawing from which our Engraving is copied, was taken on the spot eight days after this dreadful event, which destroyed a fine city, and rendered fifteen thousand persons houseless.

On the 12th of June, 1794, a violent shock of an earthquake was felt at Naples, but Vesuvius did not exhibit any symptoms of an approaching eruption until the 15th, when another very powerful shock was felt at ten o'clock in Naples and its environs.

At this instant, on the Eastern base of the cone, at the spot called *La Pedamentina*, and from the midst of ancient torrents, a new mouth disgorged a stream of liquid fire. This opening was 2875 feet in length, and 237 in breadth. Scarcely had the stream of lava began to flow, before four conical stills, each having a small crater (the third alone excepted, which had two distant mouths) arose out of the stream itself. From these different mouths

stones were darted into the air with great noise, and in a state so highly ignited, that they resembled flames of fire; the explosions were so quickly repeated, that they seemed but one, and formed a continual sheet of fire in the air, which received no other interruption than what was occasioned by the inferiority of force of some of the ejections. They sometimes vomited substances, in a small fluid state, for they expanded in the air like a soft paste, so that one might imagine they were either a part of a running lava, or masses of old lava fused and projected.

"The lava flowed in one body for some time, and at intervals flashes of light arose from the surface of it, produced by jets of hydrogenous gas, which disengaged itself from the lava, precisely in the same manner as gases expand from the surface of a fluid. Its first direction was towards *Portici* and *Resina*, so that the inhabitants of *Torre del Greco* already bewailed the fate of their neighbours, and began their thanksgivings to the Almighty for their escape. Collected together in the Church, they were still singing

hymns of joy, and expressing their gratitude, when a voice announced to them the fatal news of their approaching destiny. The stream of lava, on flowing down a declivity met in its way, divided itself into three branches; one, bearing towards *Sainta Maria de Pugliano*, traversed a space of 2063 feet; another, directing its course towards *Resina*, flowed to the distance of 3181 feet; while the remainder of the stream, falling into the Valley of Malomo, flowed towards *La Torre*.

"On reaching the Chapel of Balzano, it formed a branch towards the South-east, which terminated in the territory of *Aridlo Tirone*, after having run the length of 1490 feet; the residue of the lava pursuing its course, flowed upon *Torre*, presenting a front from 1200 to 1500 feet in breadth, and filling several deep ravines.

"On reaching the first houses of the town, the stream divided according to the different slopes of the streets, and the degrees of opposition presented by the buildings; and had not the mass of the stream suffered a diminution from the different divergencies before mentioned, not a single house would have been left standing in *Torre del Greco*.

"The lava, after taking a serpentine course through the town, at length reached the sea shore; the contact with the water diminished the speed of its course, still the current flowed into the sea in a body 1127 feet in breadth, and advanced into it a distance of 302 feet.

"Its entrance into the sea was not marked by any singular phenomenon; it began to issue from the volcano at 10 at night, and reached the sea-shore by four the next morning, continuing a very slow progressive movement into the sea throughout the whole of the 16th and the following night.

"The main stream, from the point where it issued from the volcano to that at which it stopped in the sea, measured 12,961 feet: its breadth varied. During the eruption the convulsion of the mountain was so great, that even the houses in Naples were shaken by it.

"While I was making my observations on this grand eruption at the foot of *Vesuvius*, its summit was tranquil, and no phenomena were visible about its crater. I passed the night at sea, between *Catastro* and *La Torre*, to have a nearer view of this great operation of Nature, and to prove the

truth of the opinion generally received, that great eruptions are accompanied by extraordinary phenomena in the sea.

"A more grand spectacle there could not be. On one of those serene and brilliant nights, known only in the delightful climate of Naples, a majestic stream of fire, 1483 feet in breadth, was seen at the foot of *Vesuvius*; its reflected surface formed in the atmosphere a broad and brilliant *aurora borealis*, regularly spread and terminated at its upper part by a thick and dark border of smoke, which, dilating itself in the air, covered the disc of the moon, the shining silvery light of which was enfeebled and obscured.

"The sea again reflected the illumined sky, the surface of it corresponding with this portion of the atmosphere as red as fire. At the source of this river of fire, inflamed matter was incessantly spouted out to a prodigious elevation, which, as it diverged on all sides, resembled an immense fire-work. On the sea shore, finally, the mournful spectacle of the conflagration of *La Torre* completed the picture. The vast clouds of thick black smoke which rose from the town, the flames occasionally crowning the summit of the houses, the ruins of the buildings, the noise of the falling palaces and houses, the rumbling of the volcano—these were the principal incidents of the horrible yet sublime scene. To these objects, so powerfully calculated to fix the senses, was added another which forcibly touches the heart; this was a doleful group of 15,000 persons bewailing the destruction of their city and property, who had but a moment's notice to flee and abandon their homes for ever, and were reduced to become wanderers, and dependent on the world for refuge."

Notwithstanding this great calamity, the inhabitants returned to their desolated city, and began to build even on the smoking ruins of their habitations. In the course of a very short time *Torre del Greco* was rebuilt, and as flourishing as ever; the inhabitants seeming as happy as if no disaster had befallen them.

