THE ERUPTION OF VESUVIUS.

("Quand longtemps a grondé la bouche du Vésuve.")

[I. vii.]

When huge Vesuvius in its torment long,

Threatening has growled its cavernous jaws among,

When its hot lava, like the bubbling wine,

Foaming doth all its monstrous edge incarnadine,

Then is alarm in Naples.

With dismay,

Wanton and wild her weeping thousands pour,

Convulsive grasp the ground, its rage to stay,

Implore the angry Mount--in vain implore!

For lo! a column tow'ring more and more,

Of smoke and ashes from the burning crest

Shoots like a vulture's neck reared from its airy nest.

Sudden a flash, and from th' enormous den
Th' eruption's lurid mass bursts forth amain,
Bounding in frantic ecstasy. Ah! then
Farewell to Grecian fount and Tuscan fane!
Sails in the bay imbibe the purpling stain,

The while the lava in profusion wide

Flings o'er the mountain's neck its showery locks untied.

It comes--it comes! that lava deep and rich,

That dower which fertilizes fields and fills

New moles upon the waters, bay and beach.

Broad sea and clustered isles, one terror thrills

As roll the red inexorable rills;

While Naples trembles in her palaces,

More helpless than the leaves when tempests shake the trees.

Prodigious chaos, streets in ashes lost,

Dwellings devoured and vomited again.

Roof against neighbor-roof, bewildered, tossed.

The waters boiling and the burning plain;

While clang the giant steeples as they reel,

Unprompted, their own tocsin peal.

Yet 'mid the wreck of cities, and the pride

Of the green valleys and the isles laid low,

The crash of walls, the tumult waste and wide,

O'er sea and land; 'mid all this work of woe,

Vesuvius still, though close its crater-glow,

Forgetful spares--Heaven wills that it should spare,

The lonely cell where kneels an aged priest in prayer.

Fraser's Magazine.