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For the Pennsylvania Inquirer.
HERCULANEUM AND POMPEII.

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These two famous cities, situated in the neighborhood of the bay of Naples, were destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius, in the year 79. The Roman naturalist, Pliny, did not regard Vesuvius as one of the active volcanoes. About the time of the birth of Christ, the cone of this mountain had a very regular form, and had a flat top; it did not terminate as it does now, in two points. Its sides were well wooded and cultivated, and at its foot lay the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii, with their busy, enterprising and happy population. At length, sixty-three years after the birth of Christ, an earthquake occurred which inflicted on both cities considerable damage. A succession of shocks repeated themselves for the next sixteen years. This was the warning voice of nature. At length in the August of 79, the long anticipated eruption took place. The older Pliny, at that time admiral of the Roman fleet which lay at Misenum, lost his life in his attempt to observe more closely this great natural appearance. The younger Pliny, who remained behind, has left a letter in which the eruption is described. First was visible, out of the summit of Vesuvius on high ascending, a thick, cloudy pillar of volcanic smoke, which spread itself on all sides like an immense tree. This majestic, monstrous, ashy tree darkened the heavens; from its broad crown, pregnant with mischief and destruction, the dusty foliage fell, and the country for thirty square miles around the volcano, beautiful as Eden before the eruption, was transformed into a frightful wilderness. No blade of grass was visible on those burning plains; not even an insect wanted in the sunbeam, the stifling atmosphere over the volcanic sand and lava, no form of life could breathe. Mighty, indeed, were the showers of ashes, and the outpouring of the lava, for the two cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were so completely overwhelmed that for seventeen hundred years after the catastrophe, not the slightest trace of their existence could be found. We refer our readers to Lytton Bulwer's excellent romance, entitled "The Last Days of Pompeii," which contains an interesting description of this frightful calamity.

Herculaneum lay several miles nearer Vesuvius than Pompeii, and was therefore more exposed to its influence. It appears to have been covered not only by showers of ashes, but also by alluvium and lava. In reality, beds of lava, volcanic ashes and alluvium, have accumulated over this city, to a depth of never less than seventy, and in many places more than one hundred and twelve feet.

Notwithstanding the far greater depth in which Herculaneum was buried, it was discovered before Pompeii, in consequence of the accidental sinking of a well in 1713, which led to the theatre, and in which the statues of Cleopatra and Hercules were found.

It is quite clear that no stream of lava ever reached Pompeii. The overwhelming material consisted of ashes and lapilli, or small stones. Hence, the excavation of this city is not so difficult as that of Herculaneum, for the material is loose, and can easily be removed by the spade, and the depth of the mass of ashes over the tops of the houses varies from twelve to fourteen feet. The matter, on the contrary, which envelopes Herculaneum is as hard as a rock, and hence this city has to be mined out.

The inner condition and contents of these cities are exceedingly interesting, not only to the geologist as a record of important scientific facts, but also to the antiquarian, as presenting indubitable evidence of the manners and customs of an ancient but unfortunate people. In both cities, however, only a small

number of skeletons have been found, and it is probable that most of the inhabitants not only had time to fly, but were able to carry away with them the most valuable part of their property. In the dungeons of Pompeii were found the skeletons of two soldiers chained to the wall, and in the cellar of a country house in the neighborhood, the skeletons of nineteen persons were present, who had probably concealed themselves there in order to escape the showers of ashes. They were found enclosed in a hardened tufa, and in the same matrix was visible a perfect impression of a woman with a child in her arms. The form was there imprinted on the rock, but every vestige of the remains had disappeared. On the neck of one of the skeletons in this cellar, hung a golden chain, and on the finger of another was found a ring with a diamond. On the side of the same cellar was a whole row of earthenware vessels. 119-2

The names written by the soldiers on the walls of their barracks and over their doors, are yet perfectly legible. The colors of the fresco-paintings on the walls in the inside of the buildings are as lively as if they had been just laid on. If these artificial colors have stood, it is not to be wondered at that those of shells remain unchanged. There are public wells which are decorated with shells in the same manner as it is now done in Naples; and in the room of a painter, who probably was a naturalist, was found a great collection of shells, many species being from the Mediterranean Sea, and in as well-preserved a condition as if they had lain in a museum. Some comparison of these remains with those found so constantly in a fossil condition will help us to form some idea of the lapse of time which is necessary in order to produce some degree of decomposition or fossilization. The perfect state of preservation in which these shells were found, proves that a burial of seventeen centuries is not sufficient to reduce them to that condition in which they are generally found as fossils.

The wooden beams in the houses of Herculaneum are on the outside black; but if they are separated from one another, they appear mostly as ordinary wood, and the progress which the whole mass have made to charcoal, is scarcely to be observed. Many animal and vegetable substances, easily destroyed, have in the course of time experienced a great change and decay, but the state of their preservation is really remarkable.

Fishing nets are very abundant in both cities, and are often found in a state of entire preservation. Their number at Pompeii is the more interesting, as this place now lies more than a mile from the sea. At Herculaneum linen is found, whose texture is yet easily recognised; and in the shop of a fruit dealer in this city, vessels were discovered which were filled with almonds, hazelnuts and walnuts, all of which by their forms could be easily recognised. In a baker's shop was a loaf which yet retained its form, and on which the name of the baker was printed. On the counter of an apothecary stood a box of pills, which had been changed into a fine earthy substance, and near them lay a thin cylindrical bar, from which the pills had evidently been made. By the side of these stood a pitcher with officinal herbs. In the year 1827 a quadrangular glass of preserved olives was found, and caviare, (the prepared roe of the sturgeon,) in a well preserved condition.

A perceptible difference in the condition and appearance of the vegetable and animal remains found in Herculaneum and Pompeii is recognisable. Those at Pompeii are by a grey, powder-like tufa penetrated; the remains at Herculaneum appear to have been first enveloped in a tough matter, which gradually became indurated, converting slowly the enclosed substance into a kind of charcoal.—

Some of the papyrus rolls at Pompeii still retain their form, but the writing, and especially the whole of the vegetable matter, has disappeared, and is replaced by a powdery-like tufa. At Herculaneum has the earthy matter scarcely penetrated at all, and the vegetable substance of the papyrus is changed into a thin, friable, black matter, like the tinder into which stiff paper is converted after it has been burnt, and on which the letters are still visible. Small bundles of five or six rolls bound together have sometimes lain horizontally, and are then, in this position, pressed together: they have also sometimes a perpendicular position. A small ticket is attached to each bundle, on which the name of the work is written. In only one instance have the sheets been found written on both sides. There are so many changes and improvements marked that it must be the original manuscript. The difference of handwriting

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is usually very great. Almost all are written in the Greek, and some few in the Latin. All the manuscripts were found in a private library; they were four hundred in number, and consist chiefly of works on music, rhetoric, and the art of cookery. There are two volumes of Epicurus, on nature; and the other works are by authors of the same school; and only a fragment of Chrysippus, an opponent of the Epicurean system, has been found.

The walls of Pompeii were three English miles in circumference, but the magnitude of Herculaneum has not yet been ascertained. In the last place the Theatre only can be seen; the Forum, the Temple of Jupiter and other buildings are filled with rubbish, so that further labor is necessary; and owing to the great depth in which they are buried, it is very difficult to advance in the work of excavation. The Theatre can only be seen by torch-light.

If there be any truth in the opinion of eminent antiquarians, hardly the hundredth part of the city of Herculaneum has yet been explored, and up till now the excavation has proceeded so slowly and with so much cost, that there is little hope at present of discovering other manuscripts. Italy can boast of its splendid Roman amphitheatre and Greek temple, but the interest these create ought to be secondary to the discovery of what still lies concealed in the dark cellars of Herculaneum. Although she possesses so many master pieces of ancient art, yet from what has been discovered, the probability is that the Italian collection, world-renowned as they are at present, would be still more enriched if the work of excavation were continued with anything like spirit. From the moment that the first papyrus rolls were discovered, attention ought to have been unceasingly directed to the discovery of other libraries. Both private and public buildings ought to be thoroughly examined, and no care and expense avoided. A small part of the zeal and circumspection with which the last French and Tuscan expedition to Egypt was undertaken, would be sufficient to rescue from oblivion, in a country far nearer home, in a short space of time, many of the lost works of the "Age of Augustus," and of the great Greek and Roman historians and philosophers. C—s.