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XII. *Experiments on the Nature and Properties of the Pietra fungaja, Lapis fungifer**. By P. A. GADD†.

STONES in general are in Italy called *Pietra*; a word which sometimes is used to denote the harder sort of stones, as well as stones of a certain genus; for example, *Pietra bigia, obsidiana, nephritica*, &c.; and this is the case with the so called *Pietra fungaja*. I. I. Ferber may be considered as the first person who gave a description of it in his letters from Italy. He has remarked also that a kind of it is in common use in the houses of Naples and Rome; and that he saw another kind in the possession of M. Fabbroni, at Florence: the first kind, which was found in the chalk-hills near Naples, consisted of white calcareous stalactites, and a number of small roots of vegetables; the latter was a hardened turf, dug up in the neighbourhood of some volcanic mountains.

A few years ago, M. Charles Spärre, chancellor of the academy, having been so kind as to transmit to me a piece of *pietra fungaja*, which he had brought with him from Italy. I analysed it, and found the result as follows:—It burns in an open fire, and emits the smell of putrid vegetables. When burnt in a strong fire, the greater part of it becomes dark-grey ashes. A hundred parts of this hardened turf, lost about fifteen parts in weight. When fused in a stronger heat, it is converted into a black opaque slag, which, however, is difficult to be fused. When a small part only of this earth is fused with borax, the glass acquires a dark-green colour. If a little water be poured over the calcined earth, the water exhibits traces of dissolved pot-ash, but the earth does not appear to have thereby sensibly decreased in weight. One hundred parts of the earth, previously calcined in a crucible, being analysed, were found to contain about 45 or 46 of siliceous earth, 23 argil, 7 calcareous earth, 20 calx of iron, together with traces of magnesian earth and pot-ash.

When the *pietra fungaja* is kept in a cellar, and moistened

* Mushroom-stone, or mushroom-bearing stone.

† From *Transac. Royal Acad. Stockholm* for 1797.

with water, it produces a great many eatable mushrooms, which in Italy are served up at the tables of the great as delicacies. It needs excite no wonder that mushrooms should grow on the *pietra fongaja*, since a multitude of fruitful mushroom seeds are intermixed in this soft stalaçites, as well as with the hardened turf found near volcanoes.

For the information of those who may be desirous of making mushrooms continually grow up from the *pietra fongaja*, and of increasing the quantity, it may be necessary to remark, that this effect will be produced, if, according to the experiment of M. Gleditsch, the mushroom-stones kept in cellars be moistened with water in which mushrooms have been washed *.

XIII. *On the Volcanic Island thrown up in the Neighbourhood of Iceland. By Captain VON LÖWENÖRN, of the Danish Navy* †.

IN the spring of the year 1783, a volcanic island, thrown up in the neighbourhood of Iceland, excited no little attention. According to the account of the sea-captain, who first saw it, exactly at the time when it first arose, smoke and flame seemed to rise from the sea, but no land or island was to be seen. It needs excite no wonder, therefore, that the observer was thrown into the greatest consternation, as he says himself, when he beheld the sea on fire! He and the whole crew therefore concluded that the end of the world had arrived, and they all began to prepare themselves for the awful moment: but, as they heard no trumpet, and as the sun shone in the firmament with his usual brightness, after considering what the phenomenon might be, they at last concluded that Iceland had been swallowed up by an earthquake; that this was a remainder of it; and that the flames arose from Hecla, the well-known volcano of that island. Full of this idea, they were just on the point of re-

* Does not this furnish a hint to those who rear mushrooms in gardens on beds of horse-dung? EDIT.

† From *Geographische Ephemeriden*, 1799.