bombs, after they were thrown out of the volcano ; and Mr Houel even informs us, that ſuch have burſt three times during their flight. Water therefore cannot be always the cauſe of volcanic exploſions. When thrown upon melted lead, ſalts, or eſpecially copper, it explodes indeed with vaſt force. With the laſt mentioned metal it is peculiarly and incredibly violent ; inſomuch, that it is ſaid that fur­naces have been burſt, and buildings thrown down, by the mere circumſtance of ſome of the workmen ſpitting among the melted metal; and Mr Whitehurſt calculates the force of aqueous ſteam, when thus ſuddenly and violently heated, to be no leſs than 28 times ſtronger than inflamed gunpowder.

Many philosophers attempt to account for the origin and continuance of volcanoes by the agency of the electric fluid ; but their theory is ſo ill supported by facts, that we think it would be improper at preſent to take up room with detailing it. It is certain that volcanoes exhibit many elec­trical appearances, and that great quantities of the electri­cal fluid are diſcharged at every eruption. But our know­ledge of electricity is ſtill too limited to draw any certain concluſion from theſe appearances.

VOLERY, a great birdcage, ſo large that the birds have room to fly up and down in it.

VOLGA, the largeſt river in Europe, riſes in the foreſt of Volkonſki, about 80 miles from Tver, a town in Ruſſia. This noble river waters ſome of the fineſt provinces in the Russian empire, and at laſt falls into the Caspian Sea by ſeveral mouths, below Aſtracan.

VOLITION, the act of willing. See Metaphysics.

VOLLEY, a military ſalute, made by diſcharging a great number of fire-arms at the ſame time.

VOLONES, in Roman antiquity, ſlaves who in the Punic war voluntarily offered their ſervice to the ſtate, which is the reaſon of the appellation ; upon which they were admitted to citizenſhip, as none but freemen could be ſoldiers.

VOLT, in the manege, a round or circular tread; and hence, by the phraſe *to make volts,* is underſtood a gate of two treads, made by a horſe going ſidewiſe round a centre, in ſuch a manner that theſe two treads make parallel tracts; one larger, made by the fore-feet, and another smaller made by the hind-feet; the croup approaching towards the centre, and the ſhoulders bearing out.

VOLTAIRE (Francis Arouet de), a celebrated French author, was born at Paris, February 20. 1694. His fa­ther, Francis Arouet, was *ancien notaire au Chatelel,* and treaſurer of the chamber of accounts ; his mother, Mary- Margaret Draumart. At the birth of this extraordinary man, who lived to the age of 80 years and ſome months, there was little probability of his being reared, and for a conſiderable time he continued remarkably feeble. In his earlieſt years he displayed a ready wit and a ſprightly ima­gination ; and, as he ſaid of himſelf, made verles before he was out of his cradle. He was educated, under lather Pore, in the college of Louis the Great ; and ſuch was his proficiency, that many of his essays are now exiſting, which, though written when he was between 12 and 14, ſhow no marks of infancy. The famous Ninon de l’Enclos, to whom this ingenious boy was introduced, left him a le­gacy of 2000 livres to buy him a library. Having been ſent to the equity ſchools on his quitting college, he was ſo diſguſted with the dryness of the law, that he devoted himſelf entirely to the muſes. He was admitted into the company of the Abbe Cheaulieu, the marquis de la Fare, the duke de Sully, the grand Prior of Vendome, marſhal Villars, and the chevalier du Bouillon ; and caught from them that eaſy taſte and delicate humour which diſtinguiſhed

the court of Louis XIV. Voltaire had early imbibed a turn for satire ; and, for ſome Philippics againſt the go­vernment, was impriſoned almoſt a year in the Baſtile. He had before this period produced the tragedy of *Oedipus,* which was repreſented in 1718 with great ſucceſs ; and the duke of Orleans happening to see it performed, was ſo de­lighted, that he obtained his releaſe from prison. The poet waiting on the duke to return thanks ; “ Be wise (said the duke) and I will take care of you.” “ I am infinitely obliged (replied the young man) ; but I intreat your royal highneſs not to trouble yourſelf any further about my lod­ging or board.”

He began his H*enriade* before he was 18. Having one day read ſeveral cantos of this poem when on a visit to his intimate friend, the young preſident de Maiſons, he was ſo teaſed with objections, that he loſt patience, and threw his manuſcript into the fire. The preſident, Henaut, with difficulty reſcued it. “ Remember (said Mr Henaut to him, in one of his letters) it was I that saved the Henriade, and that it coſt me a handſome pair of ruffles.” Some years after, ſeveral copies of this poem having got abroad, while it was only a ſketch, an edition of it was publiſhed, with many chaſms, under the title of *The League.* Inſtead of fame and friends, the author gained only enemies and mor­tification, by this firſt edition. The bigots took fire at it, and the poet was conſidered as highly criminal for praiſing admiral Coligny and queen Elizabith. Endeavours were even uſed to get the piece ſuppressed ; but this ſtrange deſign proved abortive. His chagrin, on this occaſion, firſt inſpired him with the thought of visiting England, in order to finiſh the work, and republiſh it in a land of liberty. He was right ; for king George I. and more particularly the princeſs of Wales, afterwards queen of England, raised an immenſe ſubſcription for him. Their liberality laid the foundation of his fortune; for on his return to France in 1728, he put his money into a lottery eſtabliſhed by Μ. Desfortes, comptroller-general of the finances. The ad­venturers received a rent charge on the *Hotel-de-Rille* for their tickets ; and the prizes were paid in ready money ; ſo that if a ſociety had taken all the tickets, it would have gained a million of livres. He joined with a numerous company of adventurers, and was fortunate.

His *Lettres Philosophiques,* abounding in bold expressions and indecent witticiſms againſt religion, having been burnt by a decree of the parliament of Paris, and a warrant being issued for apprehending the author in 1733, Voltaire very prudently withdrew ; and was ſheltered by the marchioneſs du Chatelet, in her castle of Cirey, on the borders of Cham­pagne and Lorraine, who entered with him on the ſtudy of the ſyſtem of Leibnitz, and the principia of Newton. A gallery was built, in which Voltaire formed a good col­lection of natural hiſtory, and made an infinite number of experiments on light and electricity. He laboured in the mean time on his Elements of the Newtonian Philosophy, then totally unknown in France, and which the numerous admirers of Des Cartes were very little deſirous ſhould be known. In the midſt of theſe philoſophic purſuits he produced the tragedy of *Alzira.* He was now in the me­ridian of his age and genius, as was evident from the tra­gedy of *Mahomet,* firſt acted in 1741 ; but it was repre­ſented to the procureur-general as a performance offensive to religion ; and the author, by order of cardinal Fleury, withdrew it from the ſtage. *Merope,* played two years after, 1743, gave an idea of a ſpecies of tragedy, of which few­ models had exiſted. It was at the repreſentation of this tragedy that the pit and boxes were clamorous for a sight of the author ; yet it was ſeverely criticiſed when it came