

which we had just descended ; whilst, in front of us, the ridge on which we were posted curved in a semicircle towards a mass of lava suspended over a precipice, and, at the same time, enclosed a steeply-inclined mass of the cinders and scoriæ, abruptly broken by the edges of the abyss into which the present crater opens.

“ This crater includes within its walls six distinct vents. Two of these eject that cloud of hydrochloric and sulphurous acid gases which at all times overhangs the summit of the mountain. The third mouth, which is situated to the right, also belches a thick and whitish smoke, in whose midst red-hot stones flash to and fro like sparks, as they incessantly rise and fall, with a strange reverberation, like the sound of heavy surf on a storm-beaten coast, making the hearer involuntarily think

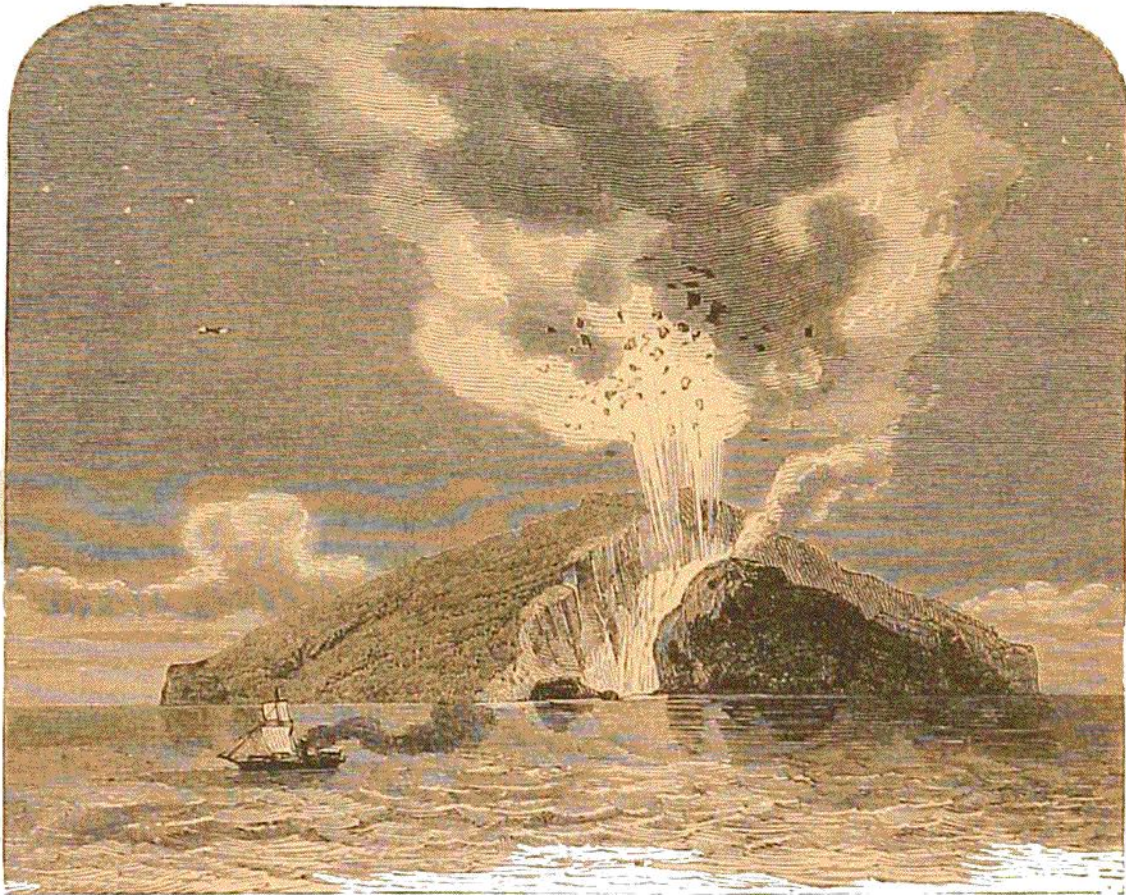


FIG. 145.—VOLCANIC ISLAND OF STROMBOLI.

of the fabled caves of the demons. To the left three other vents exhibit only intermittent eruptions ; of these, two evidently open on the same focus, inasmuch as they are always kindled and extinguished simultaneously. The third, whose eruptions are the least frequent, lies nearest to the spectator. It is from hence the most formidable detonations proceed, and the highest discharges of rocks and burning cinders.

“ As we had arrived in broad daylight, we had been enabled to examine thoroughly all the lava-masses, the steep ridges, the declivities of ashes, and the various features of the remarkable scene, whose uniform blackness was only relieved here and there by fragments of dull red scoria. But the sun now set, and the short twilight of southern latitudes was rapidly giving way to night. In proportion as the glow faded from the sky, the glare seemed to deepen in the depths of the abyss. The smoke