

THE GEYSERS.

Of all the physical phenomena of Iceland, however, the most remarkable are its *Geysers*.

These have been admirably described by Lord Dufferin in his account of a visit to Iceland and an exploration of its natural curiosities :—*

We found ourselves, he says, in the presence of the steaming geysers.

I do not know that I can give you a better notion of the place than by saying that it looked as if—for about a quarter of a mile—the ground had been honey-combed by disease into numerous sores and orifices : not a blade of grass grew on its hot, inflamed surface, which consisted of unwholesome-looking, red, livid clay, or crumpled shreds and shards of slough-like incrustations. Naturally enough, our first impulse on dismounting was to scamper off at once to the Great Geyser. As it lay at the furthest end of the congeries of hot springs, in order to reach it we had to run the gauntlet of all the pools of boiling water and scalding quagmires of soft clay that intervened, and consequently arrived on the spot with our ankles nicely poulticed. But the occasion justified our eagerness. A smooth silicious basin, seventy-two feet in diameter and four feet deep, with a hole at the bottom as in a washing-basin on board a steamer,

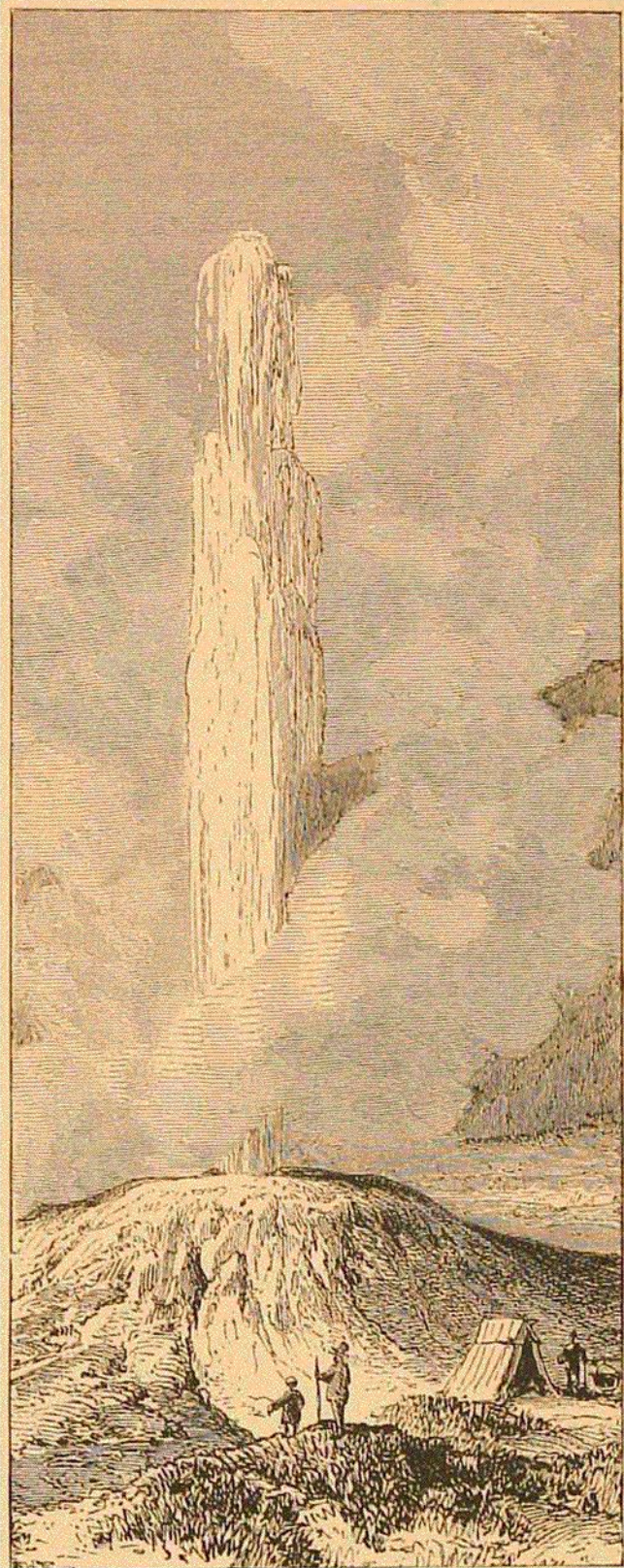


FIG. 148.—GREAT GEYSER OF ICELAND.

* Lord Dufferin, "Letters from High Latitudes."