

According to our observer, the diameter of the crater was 650 feet. The outline was continually enlarging, and was enlarged even under his eyes, by the aggregation of the scoriæ incessantly descending upon its borders. Great balloons of aqueous vapour liberated themselves from the mouth of the volcano, with great violence, but without noise.

These watery vapours and other discharges blended in a luminous column upwards of 1950 feet in height. From time to time this whirling, rotating pillar was traversed by a jet of black ashes, swift as lightning. But it was in the eruption of solid matter that the true magnificence of the phenomenon revealed itself. A dense column of black smoke then rose with incredible fury, sombre and menacing, side by side with the white radiant column of aqueous vapour. It formed in



FIG. 158.—THE ISLE FERDINANDA, IN THE MONTH OF AUGUST 1831.
(From the original drawing by M. Kellin.)

the air, at an elevation of 650 feet, a sheaf, or plume, or canopy ; recalling the memory of that celebrated pine-tree cloud which everybody has invoked, since Pliny, to give an idea of the vaporous masses that overhang Vesuvius during an eruption.

In this column the spectator might see dancing and whirling cinders, and stones, ashes, scoriæ, and all kinds of volcanic débris, which afterwards fell back into the surrounding waters. Each stone launched on high drew with it a train of black sand, so that it resembled an infernal comet. And thus on the blue ground of the sky were described the most fantastic figures, lit up with arrows and stars of fire and flame.

The waters, heated by the incandescent masses which continually descended, boiled as in a caldron, and wreathed the entire circuit of the island with an immense