

tened to take refuge in wooden sheds and barracks, which were run up outside the shattered walls of the ill-fated town.

Dolomieu thus describes the painful impression produced on his mind by the sight of the ruined Polistena :—

“ I had seen,” says the French geologist, “ Messina and Reggio ; I had lamented the fate of those two cities : in neither had I found an inhabitable house, nor one which did not require rebuilding from its foundations. But, after all, the skeleton, the framework, of these two cities still exists ; most of their walls are standing. You can see what they have been. Messina still presents, at a certain distance, an imperfect image of its whilom splendour. Every person can recognize either his house or its former site. I had seen Tropæa and Nicotera, where but few houses have not been seriously injured, and many have been entirely demolished. My



FIG. 129.—FISSURE NEAR POLISTENA (CALABRIA).

imagination could conceive of nothing more terrible than the fate which had befallen these towns. But when from the high ground I surveyed the ruins of Polistena, the first town in the plain which met my gaze—when I contemplated those shapeless heaps of ruin which cannot even give the slightest idea of what it formerly was—when I saw that nothing had escaped destruction, and that every building had been levelled to the earth—I experienced a sentiment of terror, pity, and affright, which for some moments suspended all my faculties. The spectacle, nevertheless, was but a prelude to that which developed itself before me at every stage of my journey.”

The fissures frequently produced in the soil when an earthquake occurs were nowhere more numerous than in the neighbourhood of Polistena. In Figure 129