

A still more striking description of Etna and its crater is furnished by the eminent naturalist, M. de Quatrefages, who ascended the mountain in 1844 :—\*

“At our feet yawned the great crater. It was not a simple inverted cone or funnel, such as we had seen in all the secondary cones, and such as may be observed on the summit of Vesuvius itself. Nor was there before us that uniform blackness of rocks and ashes which characterizes Stromboli. The effects of an eruption which had occurred in 1843 were still apparent ; and the crater, as we saw it, presented the appearance of a deep, irregular valley, broken up by headlands and promontories,



FIG. 139.—THE CRATER OF MOUNT ETNA.

and composed of steep declivities bristling with enormous scoriae and blocks of lava, heaped up in masses, or rolled and twisted in a thousand different ways by the power of the volcanic forces, or by the accidental influences they had undergone in the act of falling. The blue, green, and white lava, stained here and there with broad patches of black, or streaks of sombre red, contrasted strongly with the livid colour of the enviroing rocks. Over this chaos prevailed a death-like silence ; long wreaths of white vapour noiselessly escaped from a thousand distant *fumaroles* (or vents), and lazily crept along the sides of the crater, carrying to the spot where we stood suffocating emanations of sulphurous and hydrochloric acids. The wan rays

\* [Quatrefages, “Rambles of a Naturalist,” pp. 92, *et seq.*]