

of the moon, mingling with those of the coming dawn, fitly accompanied this savage scene, whose grand and supernatural character no words can adequately express.

"The soil on which we trod consisted wholly of cinders and scorix, was damp and warm, and encrusted with a white efflorescence like hoar-frost. This humidity, however, was simply an effect of the acid exhaled from the crater, which moistened and corroded everything it touched; while the silvery film, on which a few crystals glittered, was a deposit of sulphur sublimated by the volcano, and of salts formed by the chemical reactions that were constantly occurring in this Cyclopean laboratory.

"By following the narrow ridge which borders the crater to the south, we gained the highest point; this is found on the eastern extremity. An indescribable spectacle was here revealed before our gaze. The sky was cloudless, the air exquisitely transparent; while the horizon, which, from the shortness of the twilight, was now brightly illuminated, seemed without other limit than that resulting from the curvature of the earth's surface. From our lofty pedestal we looked down a depth of four or five thousand feet on the loftiest summits of the Pelorian and Madonian Mountains; while the whole of Sicily lay spread before us like a map. . . .

"After throwing one last look at the valley of the crater, we quitted our place of observation, and descended towards the foot of a circular knoll which lay to the east. Our guide soon stopped us near a steep and narrow declivity, which was entirely detached from the rounded margin of the cone, and abutted upon a precipice several hundred feet in depth. There we saw him roll up the sleeve of his jacket, and apply it to his mouth—a proceeding which he signified by signs that we must imitate—and rushing forward across the slope, he exclaimed, *Fate Presto!*—(make haste). We followed him unhesitatingly, and soon reached the margin of the mouth, which, in 1842, had projected its torrents of lava into the Val del Bove, and being re-opened in 1843, threatened all the surrounding district. . . .

"Here all attempts at description are useless. A vast and irregular circular enclosure of perpendicular walls fenced in the chasm. To the left, at the foot of the escarpment, a large vent had been opened, from which clouds of fiery red smoke proceeded. In the centre, everywhere lay immense blocks of lava, that had been cracked, and rent, and shattered; some black, others of a dark red; but all exhibiting in their fissures the glowing tints of the lava from which they had been separated. A thousand wafts of white or gray smoke crossed and re-crossed each other in all directions, with a deafening noise, and with a shrill whistling sound like that of the steam-signal of a locomotive. Unfortunately we could do no more than throw a hasty glance at this singular and fearful scene. The hydrochloric acid entered our throats, and penetrated to the last ramifications of the bronchial tubes. Hastily, and with a feeling like intoxication, we returned to the protecting slope where we might breathe with less difficulty; and then, sustaining ourselves on our staves, we leaped to the edge of the crumbling declivity, and in five minutes had reached the base of the cone, whose ascent had cost us upwards of an hour."

The ascent of the mountain is frequently undertaken for the pur-