

and detonations like those of an army's heavy cannon, which were heard at a distance of forty miles. Just above Nicolosi two large rents were visible, from which ashes, and stones, and scoriæ, and sand were ejected incessantly for a period of nearly four months. Their accumulation composed the double cone now known as Monti Rossi.

From the first great chasm issued a river of fiery lava, which encountered, in the earlier part of its course, a small cavernous cone called Mompilière, and flowing into its subterranean hollows, melted away its base, so that the cone subsided to a considerable extent. It then resumed its onward progress, and destroying in succession fourteen towns and villages, arrived at the walls of Catania. These formed a

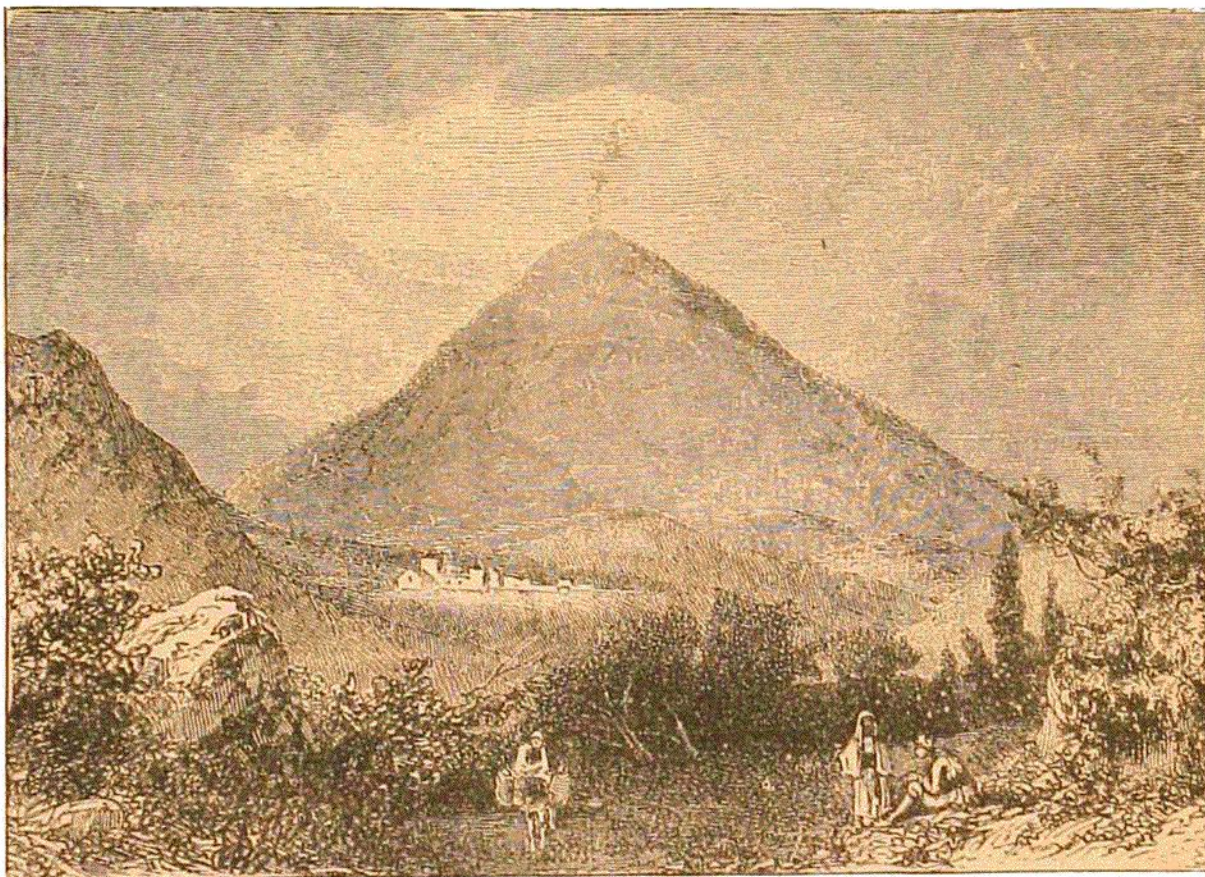


FIG. 140. —NICOLOSI AND MOUNT ETNA.

bulwark sixty feet in height, and of very massive construction, and it was supposed would suffice to arrest the flowing current; but slowly accumulating until it reached the summit of the rampart, it poured down into the doomed city its molten cataracts. Then through street and lane it took its devastating course, and never paused until it reached the sea. Here the petrified stream was found to measure 600 yards in width, and forty feet in depth. The city walls were of such solidity that the lava did not overthrow but bury them, and portions may still be seen with the solidified lava encrusted upon them.

The rate at which the lava-river travelled varied in different parts of its course. It accomplishes the first thirteen miles in twenty days, while twenty-three days were occupied by the last ten miles. Near its source its velocity was estimated at