

regularly rose and fell at rhythmic intervals. A peculiar noise was audible, like the decrepitations of the air entering by gusts through the door of a mining furnace. A cloud of white vapours rose at each decrepitation, upheaving the lava, which fell back after each commotion. These vapour-clouds carried off the surface of the lava numerous fragments of red-hot scoria, which danced in the air as if tossed to and fro by invisible hands, in a rhythmic measure, above the edge of the opening. This regular and attractive movement was interrupted at intervals of fifteen minutes by more violent oscillations. The mass of whirling vapours then remained immovable for a moment, or even made a short hurried motion of retrogression, as if it was

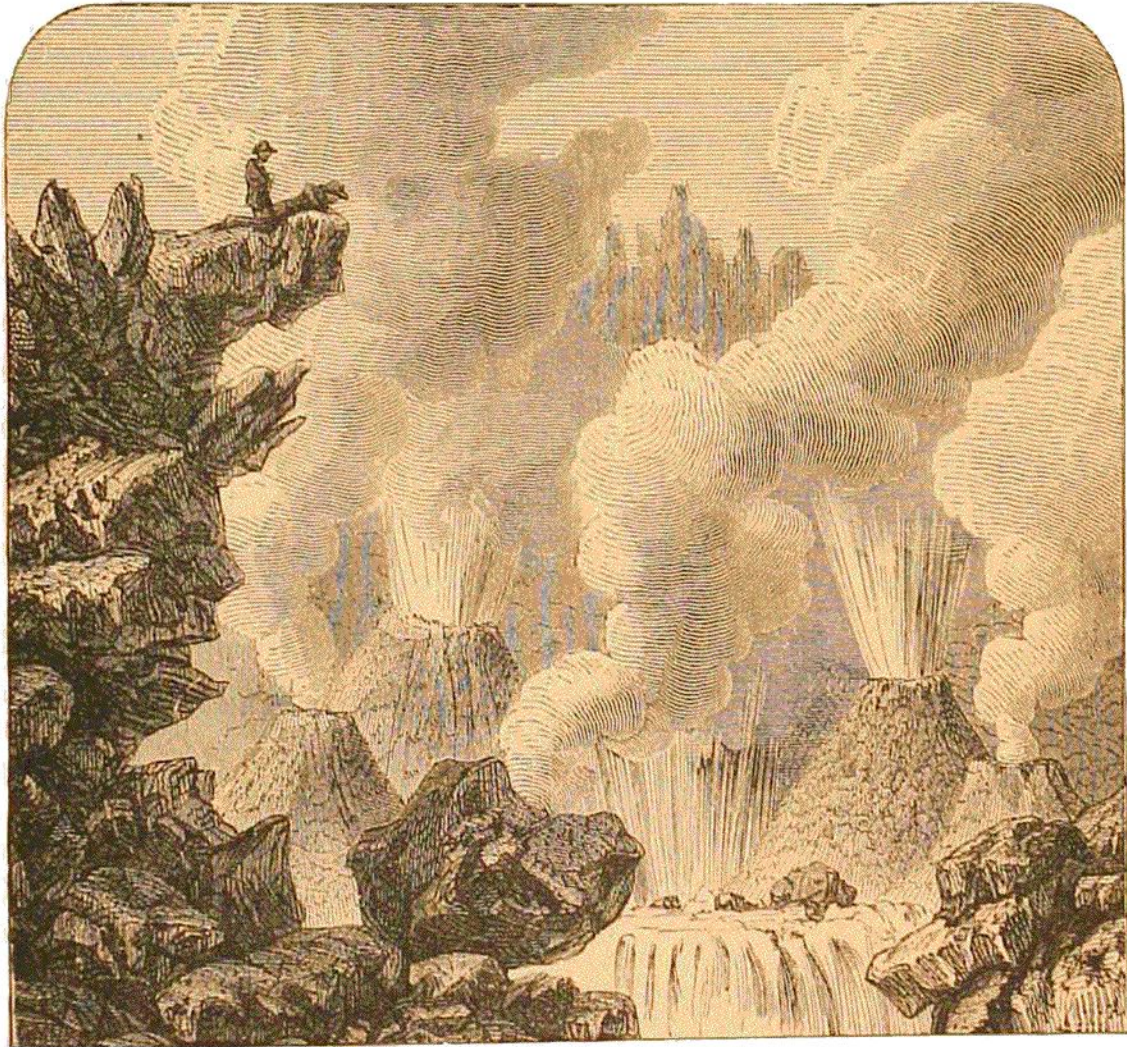


FIG. 146.—CRATER OF STROMBOLI.

inhaled by the crater, from whose depths the lava surged up more furiously, as if to encounter it. Then the ground trembled, and the sides of the crater *shivered* as they inclined inwards. It was a veritable earthquake. From the mouth of the crater proceeded a hoarse reverberating bellow, and at the end an immense balloon of vapour grew on the surface of the lava, rising up with a sonorous and thundering clash. The whole surface of the lava splintered into incandescent fragments was then ejected into the air.

The heat now became insupportable ; and a sheaf of flames shooting suddenly upwards, fell back in a fiery rain on the surrounding district. A few balls rose to