

ancient volcano ;" close to the city of Quito, the volcano of Pichincha, 19,535 feet ; and to the north towers the beautiful snow-clad mass of Cayambè Urcu. Eleven volcanoes are visible from the plain of Quito. Cotopaxi is the king of these, the monarch of mountains, crowned long ago by the shadows of departed ages. Its configuration is so extremely regular that the Spanish-Americans speak of it as moulded by a turner's wheel. In 1741, La Condamine and Bouguier, while engaged in their measurement of an arc of the meridian, had an opportunity of observing the eruption of this mountain, when it hurled shafts of fire to a height of 5000 feet. The outbreak continued for three years, and inundated with floods of lava an immense extent of fertile country.

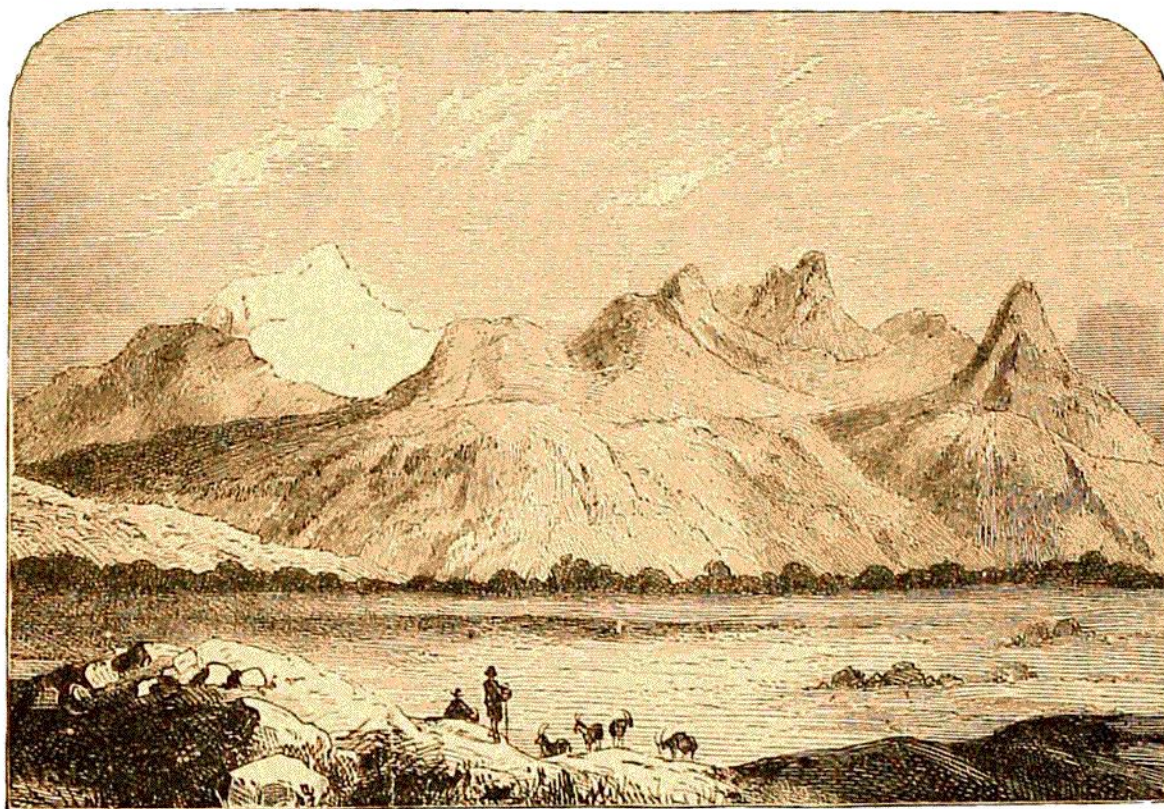


FIG. 156.—VOLCANO OF PICHINCHA.

Pichincha served as the asylum of La Condamine and Bouguier, in 1742, during the astronomical researches we have already spoken of. They spent three weeks at an elevation (15,924 feet) equal to that of Mont Blanc, and the cross which they erected as a landmark still stands upon one of its summits.\*

\* [Humboldt, "Kosmos ;" English translation, vol. v.]