

tions of the peoples of Europe and Africa? Ought not men to see in so remarkable an event the prelude of a great geological catastrophe?

Brooding over so many subjects of anxiety, the minds of the inhabitants of the Mediterranean coasts fell a prey to the gravest pre-occupations. Men of science accordingly urged their various Governments to dispatch commissions of inquiry to the scene of the disturbance. The French administration determined that the brig *La Flèche*, commanded by Captain Lapierre, should reconnoitre the exact position of Ferdinanda, and enlighten navigators on the nature of this geological upheaval. M. Constant Prévost, a geologist of deserved repute, was appointed by the Academy of Sciences to sail on board *La Flèche*, and collect the data necessary for elucidating the question. M. Constant Prévost took with him M. Edmond Joinville, a skilful draughtsman, well acquainted with Sicily.

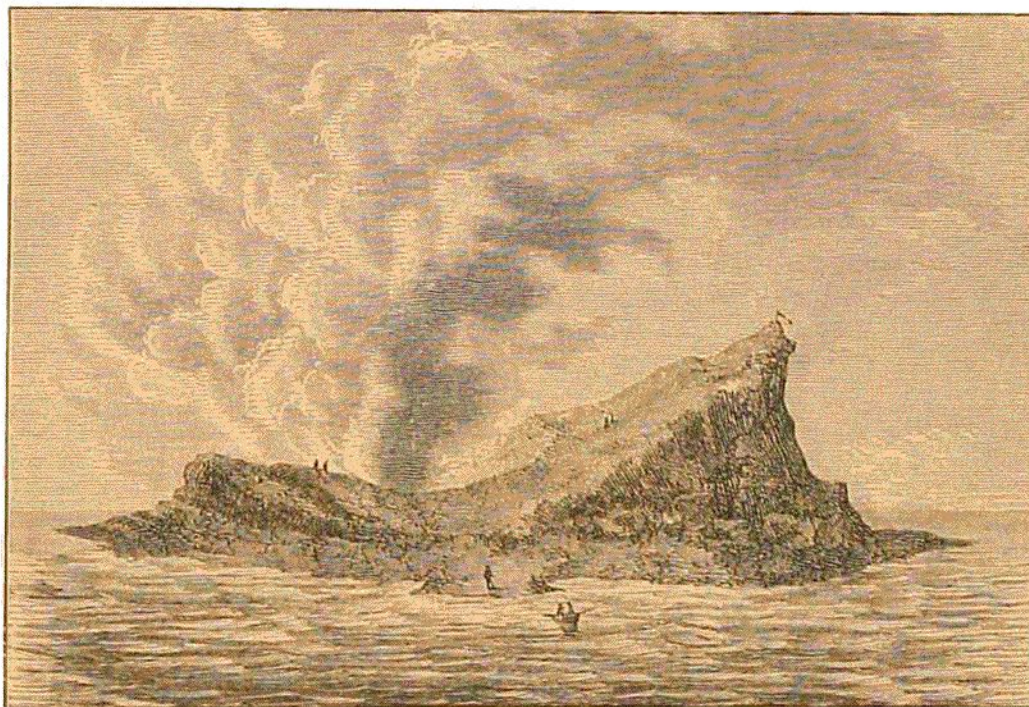


FIG. 159 — VIEW OF THE CRATER OF FERDINANDA ISLAND, SEPT. 29, 1831.
(After M. Constant Prévost.)

They quitted Toulon on the 16th of September 1831, and after traversing the channel which separates Corsica from Sardinia, arrived, on the 25th, in sight of the new volcano. They were compelled by a succession of storms to keep to windward until the 29th, when they succeeded in making the island.

It was then a black and desolate mass, 2250 feet in circuit and 230 feet in height. Two peaks, separated by a broad valley, rose above the crater. The shores were precipitous, and broken up into sharp jagged ridges, except on the side where clouds of vapour still issued in abundance from the soil. This vapour escaped simultaneously from an interior cavity and from the surface of the sea.

The brown and sometimes oily colour of the abrupt walls of the island apparently indicated a massive rock, such as basalt or serpentine. But later observations proved that it was wholly composed of loose and shifting materials.

At noon on the 28th, M. Constant Prévost in one of the ship's boats surveyed