

## XI.

THE LAVA-FIELDS OF NORTH-WESTERN  
EUROPE.<sup>1</sup>

FROM the earliest times of human tradition the basin of the Mediterranean has been the region from which our ideas of volcanoes and volcanic action have been derived. When the old classical mythology passed away and men began to form a more intelligent conception of a nether region of fire, it was from the burning mountains of that basin that the facts were derived which infant philosophy sought to explain. Pindar sang of the crimson floods of fire that rolled down from the summit of Etna to the sea as the buried Typhœus struggled under his mountain load. Strabo, with matter-of-fact precision and praiseworthy accuracy, described the eruptions of Sicily and the Æolian Islands, and pointed out that Vesuvius, though it had never been known as an active volcano, yet bore unequivocal marks of having once been corroded by fires that had eventually died out from want of fuel. In later centuries, as the circle of human knowledge and experience widened, it has still been by the Mediterranean type that the volcanic phenomena of other countries have been judged. When a geologist thinks or writes of volcanoes

<sup>1</sup> *Nature*, November 1880.