



BAY OF NAPLES, WITH VESUVIUS IN THE DISTANCE.

which had cooled and hardened, retaining the form in which it had boiled up and flowed forth. This floor was studded with a number of smaller cones from which gas and steam were escaping with a violent hissing noise. Among them was one very much larger than the others—the active crater—from which issued the most frightful bellowings. About every two minutes came a violent explosion, and a large quantity of stones and scoria were thrown high in the air, and fell back into the fiery throat of this tremendous furnace. The general appearance of the scene is shown in the engraving on the opposite page.

“Do you wish to go down into the crater?” asked our guides.

“Of course we do, that is what we came for,” was the answer. Then they haggled for an extra three francs apiece. At length we scrambled down the steep and

crumbling wall amid almost suffocating sulphurous fumes, and clambered over the tortured and uneven lava floor. Through numerous cracks and crevices steam and gas were escaping; the rocks were stained yellow, red, and purple with the sulphur incrustations, and I could feel the heat through the thick soles of my boots. In many of the crevices the rock was seen to be red hot, and when I thrust in my staff it suddenly caught fire.

Soon one of the guides gave a loud cry, and called us to see the molten lava, which we found boiling up through the black floor, and flowing along in a thick, viscid stream, like tar, only of a fiery colour. The heat was great, but I could approach so near as to take some of it on the end of my staff, and press into it some copper coins which I had in my pocket, having first been shown how by the guides. When the lava cooled these were