



CRATER OF VESUVIUS.

burned the dull fire of the mountain. But all day long the mysterious column of white smoke ascends—"solemn and slow as erst from Ararat" the smoke of the patriarch's sacrifice.

After an hour's drive we reached Resina, a village at the foot of the mountain. Our venturino knocked loudly at a door, and we were almost instantly surrounded by a swarm of guides, all anxious to prey upon their victims. I suppose they sleep in their clothes and turn out at a moment's notice. Making a bargain with the chief, we were soon mounted, with the aid of much officious assistance, on good horses. Through the stone-paved streets of the little town we clattered, and soon began to climb the mountain, between luxurious vineyards and fig and almond orchards growing upon the fertile volcanic soil. Our train was soon increased by four hangers-on, besides the guide. They well deserved this name, in its most literal sense, for they would catch hold of

our horses' tails, and so for part of the way we helped them instead of their helping us. At length the road became so steep that horses could no longer climb and we were forced to dismount.

Now the use of the guides whom our horses had dragged up became apparent. It was their turn to drag us up. One stout fellow tied a leather strap to a stick and gave me the stick, which I held with both hands while he took the other end of the strap over his shoulder, and another guide pushed me from behind. Between the two, by scrambling in zig-zags up the mountain's side—the most fatiguing climb I ever had in my life,—I at last reached the top and stood on the edge of the crater. The weird grandeur of the sight well repaid the toil of the ascent.

A crumbling ledge of rock ran round the summit, sloping suddenly down to a large irregular depression which was covered, and floored as it were, with black lava,