



*ETNA : The slopes of Etna are gradual, so that the lava flow is slow, allowing it to take the weird contorted shapes shown, as it cools on its surface*

ance internally. It is probable that something of this kind did occur when Pompeii and Herculaneum were engulfed and accounts for the size of the old crater which is many times the diameter of the present active one.

The outstanding thought in our minds as we returned from viewing Vesuvius was—what is the object of it all? And because we were travelling by air the answer was before our eyes the next day, when travelling over Sicily, Mount Etna, and the country in the course southwards towards Malta. Mount Etna, nearly 11,000 ft. high, was steadily and calmly issuing smoke from its apex—the opening from which the smoke issued appeared to be a couple of hundred yards in diameter, many times smaller than the old crater of Vesuvius. Here again the slopes were mainly covered with what appeared to be reddish-purple loam. The black streams visible and reaching far down the valley must have issued from the east or south-east side of the crater—we unfortunately did not pass round to these sides. A remarkable thing to notice is that in this case the very high pressure of some past eruption caused the formation of smaller discharge craters on the mountain

side and numbers of these are visible, some isolated, but others in groups (five or six in number) stepped one above the other up the slopes of the mountain.

It can clearly be seen that these first formed as small conical hills pushed out from the side of the mountain, and when eventually the discharge broke through the tops, gravity caused the lava to flow over the lower edges. The direction of the flow of what was originally the purplish-black mass is obvious from the air, but in the course of time and process of Nature it had turned into this reddish-purple substance, which looks like rich loam. Whatever it is at present it, in due course, becomes rich soil, because trees and foliage grow and develop naturally on areas which were originally lava deposits. It was also interesting to observe on the mountain side several dwelling houses still standing in the midst of small areas of originally cultivated soil, but these small areas are completely surrounded by lava streams of considerable depth, some obstruction above the little homesteads having divided and deflected the streams, which, however, reunited again some distance below the little homes. It



*ST. PETER'S : A magnificent aerial view of Rome showing St. Peter's and the Vatican City*