

Miscellaneous.

THE GREAT VOLCANO OF KILEAUA, S.I.

VOLCANO HOUSE,
June 3d—Midnight.

I suppose no man ever saw Niagara for the first time without being disappointed. I suppose no man ever saw it the fifth time without wondering how he could ever have been so blind and stupid as to find any excuse for disappointment in the first place. I suppose that any one of nature's most celebrated wonders will always look rather insignificant to a visitor at first, but on a better acquaintance will swell and stretch out and spread abroad, until it finally grows clear beyond his grasp—becomes stupendous for his comprehension. I know that a large house will seem to grow larger the longer one lives in it, and I also know that a woman who looks criminally homely at a first glance will often so improve upon acquaintance as to become really beautiful before the month is out.

I was disappointed when I saw the great volcano of Kileaua (Ke-low-way-ah) to-day for the first time. It is a comfort to me to know that I fully expected to be disappointed, however, and so, in one sense at least, I was not disappointed.

As we "raised" the summit of the mountain and began to canter along the edge of the crater, I heard Brown exclaim, "There's smoke, by George!" (poor infant—as if it were the most surprising thing in the world to see smoke issuing from a volcano), and I turned my head in the opposite direction and began to crowd my imagination down. When I thought I had got it reduced to about the proper degree, I resolutely faced about and came to a dead halt. "Disappointed, anyhow!" I said to myself. "Only a considerable hole in the ground—nothing to Haleakala—a wide, level, black plain in the bottom of it, and a few little sputtering jets of fire occupying a place about as large as an ordinary potatoe-patch, up in one corner—no smoke to amount to anything. And these 'tremendous' perpendicular walls they talk about, that enclose the crater! they don't amount to a great deal either; it is a large cellar—nothing more—and precious little fire in it, too." So I soliloquized. But as I gazed, the "cellar" insensibly grew. I was glad of that, albeit I expected it. I am passably good at judging of heights and distances, and I fell to measuring the diameter of the crater. After considerable deliberation I was obliged to confess that it was rather over three miles, though it was hard to believe it at first. It was growing on me, and tolerably fast. And when I came to guess at the clean, solid, perpendicular walls that fenced in the basin, I had to acknowledge that they were from 600 to 800 feet high, and in one or two places even a thousand, though at a careless glance they did not seem more than two or three hundred. The reason the walls looked so low is because the basin itself is so large. The place looked a five minger and a little deeper every it was under, by the watch. And still no getting gloriously small; there was time I saw an up and that. About this increase the size of the crater. It was a house perched on the extreme edge of the wall, at the far end of the basin, like a marten box under the eaves of a cathedral! That wall appeared immensely higher after that than it did before.

I reflected that night was the proper time to view a volcano, and Brown, with one of those eruptions of homely wisdom which rouse the admiration of strangers, but which custom has enabled me to contemplate calmly, said five o'clock was the proper time for dinner, and therefore we spurred up the animals and trotted along the brink of the crater for about the distance it is from the Lick House, in San Francisco, to the Mission, and then found ourselves at the Volcano House.

On the way we passed close to fissures several feet wide and about as deep as the sea, no doubt, and out of some of them steam was issuing. It would be suicidal to attempt to travel about there at night. As we approached the lookout house I have before spoken of as being perched on the wall, we saw some objects ahead which I took for the brilliant white plant called the "silver

sword," but they proved to be "buoys"—pyramids of stones painted white, so as to be visible at night, and set up at intervals to mark the path to the lookout house and guard unaccustomed feet from wandering into the abundant chasms that line the way.

By the path it is half a mile from the Volcano House to the lookout house. After a hearty supper we waited until it was thoroughly dark and then started to the crater. The first glance in that direction revealed a scene of wild beauty. There was a heavy fog over the crater and it was splendidly illuminated by the glare from the fires below. The illumination was two miles wide and a mile high, perhaps; and if you ever, on a dark night and at a distance beheld the light from thirty or forty blocks of distant buildings all on fire at once, reflected strongly against overhanging clouds, you can form a fair idea of what this looked like.

THE VISION OF HELL AND ITS ANGELS.

Arrived at the little thatched lookout house we rested our elbows on the railing in front and looked abroad over the wide crater and down over the sheer precipice at the seething fires beneath us. The view was a startling improvement on my daylight experience. I turned to see the effect on the balance of my company and found the reddest-faced set of men I almost ever saw. In the strong light every countenance glowed like red-hot iron, every shoulder was suffused with crimson and shaded rearward into dingy, shapeless obscurity! The place below looked like the infernal regions and these men like half-cooled devils just come up on a furlough.

I turned my eyes upon the volcano again. The "cellar" was tolerably well lighted up. For a mile and a half in front of us and half a mile on either side, the floor of the abyss was magnificently illuminated; beyond these limits the mist hung down their gauzy curtains and cast a deceptive gloom over all that made the twinkling fires in the remote corners of the crater seem countless leagues removed—made them seem like the camp fires of a great army far away. Here was room for the imagination to work! You could imagine those lights the width of a continent away—and that hidden under the intervening darkness were hills, and winding rivers, and weary waste of plain and desert—and even then the tremendous vista stretched on, and on, and on!—to the fires and far beyond! You could not compass it—it was the idea of eternity made tangible—and the longest end of it made visible to the naked eye!

The greater part of the vast floor of the desert under us was as black as ink, and apparently smooth and level; but over a mile square of it was ringed and streaked and striped with a thousand branching streams of liquid and gorgeously brilliant fire! It looked like a colossal railroad map of the State of Massachusetts done in chain lightning on a midnight sky. Imagine it—imagine a coal-black sky shivered into a tangled net-work of angry fire!

Here and there were gleaming holes twenty feet in diameter, broken in the dark crust, and in them the melted lava—the color a dazzling white just tinged with yellow—was boiling and surging furiously; and from these holes branched numberless bright torrents in many directions, like the "spokes" of a lady's fan, and kept a tolerably straight course for a while and then swept round in huge rainbow curves, or made a long succession of sharp worm-fence angles, which looked precisely like the fiercest jagged lightning. These streams met other streams, and they mingled with and crossed and recrossed each other in every conceivable direction, like skate tracks on a popular skating ground. Sometimes streams twenty or thirty feet wide flowed from the holes to some distance without dividing—and through the opera-glasses we could see that they ran down small, steep hills and were genuine cataracts of fire, white at their source, but soon cooling and turning to the richest red, grained with alternate lines of black or gold. Every now and then masses of the dark crust broke away and floated slowly down these streams like rafts down a river. Occasionally the molten lava flowing under the superincumbent crust broke through—split a dazzling streak, from five hundred to a thousand feet long, like a sudden flash of lightning, and then acre after acre of the cold lava parted into fragments, turned up edgewise like cakes of ice when a great river breaks

up, plunged downward and swallowed in the crimson cauldron. Then the wide expanse of the "thaw" maintained a ruddy glow for a while, but shortly cooled and became black and level again. During a "thaw," every dismembered cake was marked by a glittering white border which was superbly shaded inwards by aurora borealis rays, which were a flaming yellow, where they joined the white border, and from thence toward these points tapered into glowing crimson, then into a rich, pale rich carmine, and finally into a faint blush, that held its own a moment and then dimmed and turned black. Some of the streams preferred to mingle together in a tangle of fantastic circles, and then they looked something like the confusion of ropes one sees on a ship's deck when she has just taken in sail and dropped anchor—provided one can imagine those ropes on fire.

Through the glasses, the little fountains scattered about looked very beautiful. They boiled, and coughed, and spluttered, and discharged sprays of stringy red fire—of about the consistency of mush, for instance—from ten to fifteen feet into the air, along with a shower of brilliant white sparks—a quaint and unnatural mingling gout of blood and snow-flakes!

We had circles and serpents and streaks of lightning all twined and wreathed and tied together, without a break throughout an area of more than a mile square (that amount of ground was covered, though it was not strictly "square,") and it was with a feeling of placid exultation that we reflected that many years had elapsed since any visitor had seen such a splendid display—since any visitor had seen anything more than the now snubbed and insignificant "North" and "South" lakes in action. We had been reading old files of Hawaiian newspapers and the "Record Book" at the Volcano House, and were posted.

I could see the North Lake lying out on the black floor away off in the outer edge of our panorama, and knitted to it by a webwork of lava streams. In its individual capacity it looked very little more respectable than a schoolhouse on fire. True, it was about nine hundred feet long and two or three hundred wide, but then, under the present circumstances, it necessarily appeared rather insignificant, and besides it was so distant from us. We heard a week ago that the volcano was getting on a heavier spree than it had indulged in for many years, and I am glad we arrived at the right moment to see it under full blast.

I forgot to say that the noise made by the bubbling lava is not great, heard as we heard it from our lofty perch. It makes three distinct sounds—a rushing, a hissing, and a coughing or puffing sound; and if you stand on the brink and close your eyes it is no trick at all to imagine that you are sweeping down a river on a large low-pressure steamer, and that you hear the hissing of the steam about her boilers, the puffing from her escape-pipes and the churning rush of the water abaft her wheels. The smell of sulphur is strong, but not unpleasant to a sinner.

THE PILLER OF FIRE.

We left the lookout house at ten o'clock in a half cooked condition, because of the heat from Pele's furnaces, and wrapping up in blankets (for the night was cold) returned to the hotel. After we got out in the dark we had another fine spectacle. A colossal column of cloud towered to a great height in the air immediately above the crater, and the outer swell of every one of its vast folds were dyed with a rich crimson luster, which was subdued to a pale rose tint in the depressions between. It glowed like a muffled torch and stretched upward to a dizzy height towards the zenith. I thought it just possible that its like had not been seen since the children of Israel wandered on their long march through the desert so many centuries ago over a path illuminated by the mysterious "pillar of fire." And I was sure that I now had a vivid conception of what the majestic "pillar of fire" was like, which almost amounted to a revelation.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MAN AND BEAST.

It is only at very long intervals that I mention in a letter matters which properly pertain to the advertising columns, but in this case it seems to me that to leave out the fact that there is a neat, roomy, well furnished and well kept hotel at the volcano, would be to remain silent upon a point of the very highest importance to any one who may

desire to visit the place. The surprise of finding a good hotel in such an outlandish spot startled me considerably more than the volcano did. The house is new—built three or four months ago—and the table is good. One could not easily starve here even if the meats and groceries were to give out, for large tracts of land in the vicinity are well paved with excellent strawberries. One can have as abundant a supply as he chooses to call for. There has never, heretofore, been anything in this locality for the accommodation of travelers but a crazy old native grass hut, scanty fare, hard beds of matting and a Chinese cook.

MARK TWAIN, in Sac. Union.

EXTRAORDINARY ENGINEERING.

In an abstract of the report of Brig. Gen. D. C. McCallum, Military Director and Superintendent of Railroads in the United States, by appointment of the War Department, we find the following specifications of services rendered by his construction corps:

"Some of the achievements of General McCallum's department deserve to rank with the most remarkable engineering feats of modern times. The wonderful bridge over the Chattahoochee, seven hundred and eighty feet long and ninety-two feet high, was built by the construction corps in four and a-half days; the bridge over the Potomac Creek, at Aquia, four hundred and fourteen feet long and eighty-two feet high, was built, ready for trains to pass, in forty working hours. In their leisure time this corps rebuilt the Chattanooga rolling mills, which turned out in a few months nearly 4,000 tons of railway iron for the government, and were sold at the end of the war for a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. With justifiable pride Gen. McCallum classes the attempt to supply Sherman's army of a hundred thousand men and sixty thousand horses and mules from a base three hundred and sixty miles distant, over a line of a single track, as one of the boldest ideas of the war. Whole corps, and even armies, were frequently transported hundreds of miles on the mere verbal orders of their commanders.

In 1865 the Fourth Army Corps were transported from East Tennessee to Nashville, a distance of three hundred and sixty miles, without delay or difficulty—this herculean task requiring nearly fifteen hundred cars. Nor were the services thus rendered unattended with danger. Guerrillas and raiding parties dogged the footsteps of the construction corps wherever they went.

In the first six months of 1865 one wrecking train picked up and brought into Nashville sixteen wrecked locomotives and nearly three hundred car loads of wheels and bridge iron, the destructive handiwork of rebel raiders. Hood was a thorn in McCallum's side; but the damage he did was repaired with wonderful celerity.

In October, 1864, Hood, passing round Sherman's army, tore up thirty-five miles of track and burned four hundred and fifty feet of bridges between Chattanooga and Atlanta. The damage was made good and the line put in working order again in thirteen days. Between Tunnel Hill and Resaca twenty-five miles of track and two hundred and thirty feet of bridging were reconstructed in seven days and a half.

THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL.

Not the least interesting thing in St. Petersburg is the Foundling Hospital, a government institution of the first order, and although of an extent equal to 125,000 square feet is still but a branch of the one in Moscow. About 10,000 children are admitted annually. They are brought in sometimes almost immediately after birth, openly to the receiving office, where they are washed, ticketed and placed in charge of a nurse. They remain six weeks, and if they are healthy they are sent off into the country to peasants, who take care of them for about a dollar a month. They may be claimed any time before they reach ten years.

The practical care of those children is of the most perfect kind. We were shown by the officers and matrons through two stories of the building, thus obtaining a good idea of its extent and management.

Each story consists of a row of rooms of moderate extent, extending right across the gallery, but divided from each