

THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.

BY W. P. FRANK.

In the Pacific Ocean, two thousand miles southwest of San Francisco, are situated that group of islands, known as the Sandwich or Hawaiian Islands. The group consists of twelve islands, four large and four small ones inhabited, and four which are little more than barren rocks; their names are as follows:

Nihoa, a barren rock.	
Niihau, 30 miles long and 5 miles wide.	
Kauai, a barren rock.	
Lanai, 20 miles long and 5 miles wide.	
Molokai, 25 " " " " " "	
Lanai, 20 " " " " " "	
Maul, 61 " " " " " "	
Kahoolawe, 12 miles long and 5 miles wide.	
Molokai, barren rock.	
Hawaii, 100 miles long, 90 miles wide.	

The group extends in a north-north-west direction from the last named island. The islands are all of volcanic origin and mountainous in the interior, the mountains increasing in height from one thousand, eight hundred feet above the sea, on Niihau, the most north-westerly island, to the lofty and snow capped domes, on Hawaii, which penetrate the clouds fifteen thousand feet above the level of the sea. The volcanic origin of the group is manifest by the fact that rock that extends from the tops of the mountains to the sea, and the great number of old and extinct craters and craters cones and promontories piled ridges of rock that look as though they had been thrown out of those craters and are still standing as they fell thousands of ages ago. In many places these piles of rock appear as though they were placed by the hand of man, but by comparison with similar piles recently thrown from the bowels of existing craters it is evident that those are of like origin. It is believed by geologists that the volcanic forces that formed this group, commenced at the northwestern island, and that the islands were successively thrown up or formed by out-pourings of lava from the interior of the earth in the order in which they are named, with the exception of perhaps some of the smaller ones, which appear as if separated by earthquake force from the larger. Niihau is believed to have been split from Kauai. Hawaii is the only one of the group in which there is any active volcanic force and is the only one that has been convulsed by earthquakes since they have been known to Europeans. A recent geological writer remarks that from the degradation of its ridges and the absence of any recent volcanic products it is supposed that Kauai is the oldest member of the group—and it cannot be disputed that volcanic action ceased here before it was extinct on Oahu or the other islands. Many years must have elapsed—how many it is useless to conjecture—to convert the hard basaltic lava into rich soil which nourishes trees of immense size and which is so abundant as to give Kauai the name of the "Garden". The mountains on Kauai are eight thousand feet above the level of the sea, on the summits and slopes of which the rain falls almost every day in the year, and has furrowed the sides into thousands of ravines along which the water finds channels to the sea, affording ample supply for irrigating the fertile plains where the rain fall is only during the rainy season.

The ridges between these ravines are covered with a most luxuriant growth of tropical vegetation, varied with all the shades of green that are peculiar to the tropical trees, shrubs, plants and ferns, which give a picturesque scenery of varied beauty, for which Kauai is justly celebrated. This island too is celebrated for its having the most remarkable cave in the whole group, formed in the abrupt broken end of the ridges of Mauna Hina. The largest is more than a hundred feet wide at the mouth and twenty feet high, extending into the mountain side and gradually becoming narrower and lower until the explorer is obliged to creep on his hands and knees to an artificial wall, which is said to block up a sepulchral cave. This seems to have been one of those gigantic bubbles common in all lava streams. There are other caves in the vicinity one of which is filled with water of remarkable clearness, so much so that the smallest pebble can be seen with perfect distinctness at the depth of thirty feet. Others contain fresh water, although on the level of the sea and only a few hundred feet from it. But the most remarkable phenomenon on the island exists in the district of Mauna near Lapa. It is a very curious land bank, formed by the wind and currents, which strikes the sand with a force that makes the angle in preserved from top to bottom, without the slightest debris at the base. The sand is white, coarse, and composed of coral shells and lava. When two handfuls are scraped together, a noise resembling the bark of a dog is heard, the noise is known as the "Barking Sand." It is a common amusement for visitors to slide their horses down the steep incline, when a noise as of uttermost thunder is heard, which greatly terrifies animals not used to the experiment. No scientist has given any explanation of this remarkable phenomenon to my knowledge. The mirage is often seen on this dry hot soil so perfectly that strangers endeavor to ride round the extensive lake they see before them.

To be continued.

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SEP 17

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