

The World's Greatest Volcano

Frank G. Carpenter Visits Its Crater and Describes Its Mighty Sea of Sand.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

IN THE heart of the Tenger mountains more than a mile above the level of the Indian ocean, surrounded by some of the mightiest volcanoes upon earth, I write these notes for my American readers. I am in the town of Tosari, in the wildest section of east Java. I can hear the rumbling and grumbling of the mighty volcano of Smeroe, and by going outside can see it sending vast volumes of steam into the air. I have just returned from a visit of exploration to the active volcano of Bromo, which has sprung up in the mighty crater of the Tenger, the greatest volcanic crater on earth.

IN THE LAND OF FIRE. This island has been called the land of fire. It has more volcanoes in proportion to its area than any other part of the globe, and almost every other island of this great archipelago from the Philippines to Australia has its mountains which about forth steam fire and volcanic mud. In crossing Java I was in sight of volcanoes all the way. The island, as I have said, is about as big as New York state, but it has more than fifty mountain peaks which end in craters, some sleeping, some dead, and some still breathing forth volumes of sulphur and steam. It has ten volcanoes, each of which pierces the clouds at over 12,000 feet. There are five other volcanoes which are more than 9,000 feet high, and ten each of which is 7,000 feet and upward.

I could see the volcanoes of Salak and Gedeh at Batavia, and in coming eastward I stopped off to investigate the great tea and coffee plantations upon their slopes. Gedeh is twice as high as Mount Washington, and Salak kisses the clouds at a mile and a half above the sea. A little farther on I came to an enormous mountain which the natives call The Forge. The Javanese name is Papandayang. It is an active volcano which is always grumbling, a mighty anvil upon which Vulcan is always striking his hammer. There is a health resort near it, and you can drive almost to the crater in a carriage, and by a short walk look down into the pools of mud and sulphur which boil and spit.

Further still is Mount Galunggung, which has had some terrible eruptions in the present century. About the time that Monroe was President it vomited a deluge of hot water and mud, sweeping away trees, houses, beasts and human beings. It sent up so many stones that they fell like rain and within three hours the rivers of boiling mud which came forth destroyed everything within a radius of twenty miles. Then there was a rest of four days. At the close of that time an earthquake came and the whole top of the mountain shot into the air. The mud flowed for weeks, burying 114 villages, killing 4,000 people,



Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

THE BATTOK VOLCANO WITH THE SMEROE IN THE DISTANCE.

and covering the whole country about with a layer of greenish blue mud which in places was fifty feet deep.

VOLCANOES WHICH VOMIT MUD.

These rivers of mud are a characteristic of the Java volcanoes. The whole island is covered with the soil thrown out by them. It comes forth boiling hot, but dries into a kind of ash and eventually forms the richest land upon earth. With the mud come stones and ashes and steam. Papandayang covered the earth about it for seven miles with five feet of mud in one of its eruptions and drowned 3,000 people.

Near Bandung I saw the volcano of the upturned boat, a volcano in whose top looks just like a boat turned upside down. You make your way to the volcano through quaking plantations, and in the peak and two craters, each about 600 feet deep, both smoking and bubbling and spitting out mud, steam and gas. In the sides of the craters are sulphuric crystals and flowers. Near Djokjakarta I saw the volcano of Merapi, down which the lava is still running and further on saw a half dozen other great peaks each sending forth its column of steam.

THE GREATEST VOLCANO OF THE WORLD.

I have come here to describe the Tenger, and I send you the notes as

Java a Land of Volcanoes—It Has Twenty-five Mountain Peaks Which Are Always Vomiting Forth Steam, Mud and Flames—The Terrible Eruptions of Papandayang and Galunggung—The Wonderful Story of the Tenger—Climbing the Javanese Mountains—Cabbages Which Grow on Trees—The Volcano Of Smeroe—The Sand Sea—A View of the Active Volcano of Bromo—Pen Picture of an Eruption—Amid The Ruins of the World.

low as was hidden in clouds. We seemed to be traveling over a sea of clouds and there were other clouds above us nesting here and there in the mountains. As the sun broke forth it painted these masses of vapor with different tints and shades of gold, and as it rose higher the mountains to the eastward leaned as it were against the walls of molten gold, the rich dark blue their sides laced by this gorgeous yellow. A moment later a black sheet of clouds came right in the face of the sun, which shot its rays through a place in the center where the sheet was thinnest. In a few moments it bored a hole, as it were, through this sheet and made a funnel-like road of blue through the golden wall of the sky. It seemed a very road to heaven itself. Our ponies dragged us through clouds like these climbing up the steep hills. We wound this way and that, now crawling up steeply and now hanging over the edges of ravines down which we could look for a thousand feet into beds of snowy lavender clouds, while above us were the mountains piercing the blue.

JAVA'S MOUNTAIN FARMS.

The scenes of the earth were quite as wonderful as those of the heavens. Some of the canyons were a thousand feet deep and so steep that you would think the crops would fall out of the ground. Still these canyons were watered from the sky and on high above it. The crops were Indian corn, cabbages and potatoes. The mountains are cut up with drains and the cabbages and potato patches are shaded and heated. You could not possibly grow them without trying your horse to a tree to keep him from falling down the mountain. The cabbages and potatoes are carried down to the lowlands to market. The potatoes are delicious, as are also the cabbages, but the latter grow on trees, as it were. Each cabbage has a stem two, three, four feet long, and my guide told me that when you cut off the head from a stem another cabbage head will grow upon it. I don't think he lied.

The vegetation grew so thick that we climbed on up the mountains. At the start we rode a long distance through fern trees. The road itself is walled with ferns and the orchids hanging in the trees made the country a garden more wonderful than the Hanging Gardens of Semiramis at Babylon.

LOOK AT THE SMEROE.

About an hour before coming to the Sand sea I got a view of the highest volcano of Java. This is the Smeroe, whose crater kisses the sky at two miles and a half above the level of the Indian ocean. I saw the volcano rounding a bend in the mountain path. It lay behind green hills, a great gray blue cone painted as it were upon the light blue of the clouds. There were other mountains in its feet also blue in the distance, and out of its top as I looked came a pillar of steam. This pillar came forth in thin wreaths. I carried my pony and checked it. As I looked it thickened and darkened, the volume increased and at last a great mass of smoke of black clouds shaped like two human heads back to back shot forth and rushed against the blue of a two-headed Janus, a guardian of the gates of heaven born of Smeroe. As the smoke rose it grew thicker, until at last it formed a great cloud over the crater, rising high above it. In a few moments it separated from the mountain and Smeroe itself looked dead. It seemed to me a little eruption gotten up by the great volcano for my especial benefit and I thanked Vulcan for it. As I still looked another cloud came out and took the form of Punch, a big-headed, fat-bodied man of the clouds rising into the heavens and there losing his shape.

Passing on, I had to descend about a half-mile through fern forests loaded with orchids and then climb another mountain, going up, up, up until I pierced the very clouds. The country was wilder, the vegetation scantier and the earth was all rock and volcanic ash.

THE WONDERFUL SAND SEA.

My pony slid backward as he climbed, but at last we came to a break in the top of the wall of the volcano. As I stepped crack on what seemed to me to be the edge of the roof of the world. I rode my pony into the crack and looked down. Below me was the Sand sea, one of the most wonderful formations nature has ever made. I was in the Moenal pass, on the rim of the mighty crater of the Tenger. About me as far as eye could reach volcano piled itself upon volcano, and below me, surrounded by an almost circular wall of volcanoes, lay a vast expanse of dark brown sand as level as the floor you are sitting on as you read this line. Yes, level, but only so where it was free from volcanoes, for out of the sand rose other volcanoes, volcanoes which have burst forth from age to age since the days of the far-gone-by, when this mighty Tenger shot its deluge of fire and stone and steam and mud into the air, making the richest of the lowlands of eastern Java.

Right in front of me in the center of the Sand sea I could see the Batok. This is a symmetrical volcano or mighty cone of dark brown, which looks as though it had been plowed from peak to foot by the god of fire. Its sides are in perfect ridges, mighty gutters down which would flow the molten lava at the time of its eruption. Beyond the Batok I could see a dense smoke rising out of the top of another mountain. That was the Bromo, which is still active and which I visited a little later on. At the right of this there was a third volcano, the Widodaren, and further on the Giri. As I looked I saw two of the natives kneeling down and pray to the mountains. They had made holes in the walls of the Moenal pass in which I was standing and in them had placed their offerings of coffee and corn. They were on their knees praying and with the convulsions of nature about them and the wonderful grandeur of all the surroundings it did not seem strange.

IN THE CRATER OF THE TENGGER.

The way down to the Sand sea was almost precipitous. It was, I judge, at least a thousand feet, and there was a winding path with cliffs here and there to the foot. This path is cut out of the side of the crater, and as I slipped and slid and crawled down, leading my pony, I could see the different layers of volcanic sand showing the several deposits. Some were as fine as the finest sea sand, some strata were of pebbles the size of a lima bean, and above all lay a mass of cold lava of a rich copper color. The pebbles were of ash gray, dark brown and sulphur yellow.

I could not appreciate the size of the crater until I got to the bottom and began to cross the sea of sand, which is, perhaps, the greatest amphitheater on earth. The water is prescient. They are covered with vegetation, and they seemed to be rooted with the

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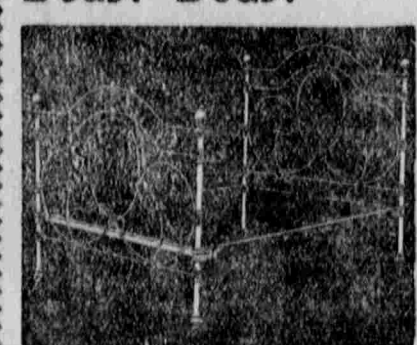
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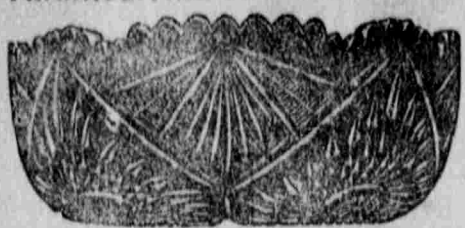
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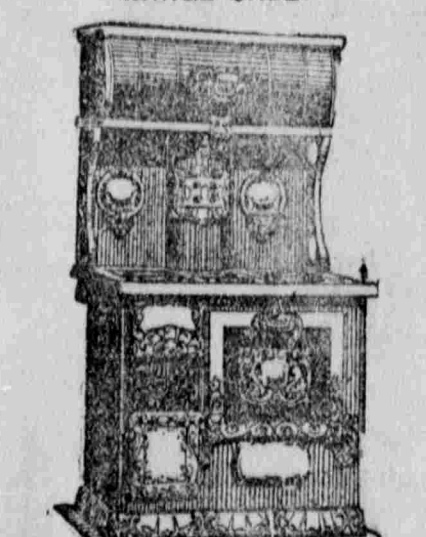
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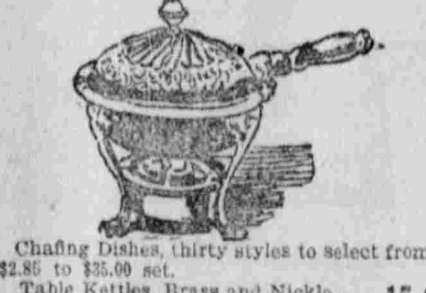
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IN THE RUINS OF THE WORLD.

I despair of giving an adequate conception of those mighty volcanic wonders. As I stood there on the edge of the Bromo crater I seemed to be among the ruins of the world. I had left my guide at the bottom of the mountain and I was all alone on this great volcano in the midst of the Sand sea looking down upon the seething, boiling, flaming mass which bubbled and hissed in that great funnel fifteen hundred feet below me. The silence was death-like and I could almost feel the heat of fire which were boiling beneath and wondered if the day of total destruction might not be at hand.

I picked my way around the narrow rim of the crater, now through walls of lava ash, so precipitous that had I missed my footing I should have rolled down into that steaming pit beneath me. As I stood there the wind came up. It roared as it wound its way around the funnel of the crater and whirled itself about its sides. At the same time the steam increased. It burst forth in a roaring, hissing sound like the blowing off of a thousand engines at once. It soon filled the crater and burst forth in great volumes, enveloping the mountain top, including myself, and rolling on up into clouds.

A few moments later it had passed away and I could again see the vast crater filled with sand and the mighty volcanic wonders about me on every side. I could imagine the day when the vast amphitheatre was one great mass of lava, when the air for miles above me was filled with fire, steam, stones, and volcanic ash, which over those great walls were flowing perhaps the greatest rivers of lava and mud the world has ever known. I could see the great volcano of the Batok opposite me now dead, ridged with streams of flame and the other volcanoes nearby spouting forth their terrible fires. As I thought thus I felt something upon my hand. I looked down—a bug as big as the head of a pin was crawling over it, and below I could see a white butterfly sitting upon a lump of sulphur on the very edge of the crater. The contrast was impressive. It was God's greatest and His smallest work side by side, and as I looked I reverently raised my hat.

Tosari, Java.

H. K. THOMAS.

Big sale on Flannel, Mohair and Plannel wares, 75c each; were from \$1.75 to \$2.50.