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“SALAMAT!”



THE return from the hill-country to Buitenzorg and Batavia was all too hurried, and the soft Malay “*Salamat*” (“Farewell”) found much regretfully left undone. We lingered at the Sans Souci by Salak until the last hour of grace for the necessary steamer preparations at Batavia, as we dreaded the reeking sea-coast with its scorching noondays and stifling nights.

The shady avenues, the wonder-garden, the picturesque passer, and the veranda view of the great blue mountain rising from the valley of palms below were more enchanting than at first. I had come to appreciate and accept the tropics then, to be aware of many fine distinctions unnoted in the first enjoyment of their beauty. I fancied that I could detect greater coolness in the shade of the tamarind than in that of any other tree; the milk of a fresh cocoanut had become the most refreshing and delicious drink; and the palm had established itself in my affections and all associations with the outer world. There had come to

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be a sense of attachment, almost comradeship, in the constant companion tree, the graceful, restless creature that the natives say will not live beyond the sound of the human voice—dying if the village or habitation it guards is deserted. So nearly human and appealing are these waving cocoas that it is fitting that there should be a census of palms quite as much as of people, and that in the last enumeration it appeared that the people and the palms existed in even numbers—one palm apiece for every one of the millions of inhabitants of the island.

The drives and the scenery about Buitenzorg, the sunset and twilight band-concerts under the great aisles of kanari-trees, had fresh interest, and it was indeed a penance to leave without taking train around to the Preanger side of Mount Gedeh, and driving up to the sanatorium of Sindanglaya, over three thousand feet above sea-level. The cool mountain air at that elevation is cure and tonic for all tropic ills, and with the mercury always 20° lower than at sea-level, Sindanglaya is the one sure refuge for all Malaysia and Cochin China, French officers from Saigon reaching it more quickly than Japan or the highlands of Ceylon. From Sindanglaya one may go to the Gedeh's crater, and to the summit of its twin peak, Pangerango, the highest mountain of the island, where, surrounded by primroses and violets,—the flora of the European temperate zone, islanded there after the period of great cold had retreated northward,—one may look down upon all the Batavia Residency, and out upon the Java Sea, and southward across Preanger hills to the greater Indian Ocean.

There was always some new or strange thing to pique one's interest and implore delay, and the promise of the great talipot-palm of the gardens bursting into its magnificent flower, or the great creeper, the *Rafflesia*, producing one of its gigantic six-foot flowers,—the biggest blossom known to the world,—was an inducement not put away without a pang. There were bird's-nest caves near by on a mountain-side, and over in the highlands toward Bantam a strange colony of "Badouins," more than a thousand refugees from religious persecution, who continue there unhindered the practice of a religion part pagan and part Buddhist, which commands the most severely upright lives. The anthropologist and economist have passed these people by, and one can find little concerning them in English print. Every day held its wonder and surprise, and rumor of more and of greater ones.

Although we were living and walking on the line of one of the great fissures of the earth's crust all that time, and eleven of the forty-five volcanoes of the island are gently active, we did not once feel the tremor of an earthquake. Table d'hôte talk often turned upon the volcanic phenomena one and another guest had experienced, and the eruption of Krakatau—by no means an old story to these colonials—was a topic for which I had an insatiable appetite. They told one thrilling stories of that summer of Krakatau's prolonged activity; of Batavian folk running frequent excursion-steamers to the Strait of Sunda to witness the spectacle of a volcano in eruption; and of that August Sunday of horror when the very end of the

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world seemed to have come to all that part of Java. A dense pall of smoke covered all of Buitenzorg's sky that day; Salak was lost in the darkness, and it was thought that it or Gedeh was in eruption when crashes and roars beyond those of the most terrific thunderstorms, the bang and boom of the heaviest artillery's bombardment, and the sound of frightful explosions filled the air, shook and rocked the ground, and rattled houses until conversation was impossible. Compass-needles spun around and around, barometers rose and fell, clouds of sulphurous vapors half strangled the people in the gloom of that awful Sabbath night, and no one slept with this dread cannonading and the end of the world seemingly close at hand. The next daylight brought the climax, a series of prolonged and awful roars, and then the very crack and crash of doom, when half of Krakatau's island was torn away with the final explosion. None who endured those days of terror can tell of them without excitement; and those whose plantations were near the Sunda Strait had yet more gruesome times during the days of darkness and of greenish, horrid twilight, when the heavens seemed to be falling about them in the rain of ashes and hot stones. Batavian folk had as terrifying experiences, and each entering ship brought more awful tales of being caught by the waves or the eddies of that sickening sea, with hot stones setting decks and rigging afire, and the weight of hot ashes threatening to sink the vessels in the sea of pumice before they could be shoveled away. Pumice covered the ocean for miles away from Krakatau; and it drifted into Batavia harbor in a surface-layer so deep that planks

were laid on it and men walked even a mile to shore, they say.

A Dutch scientific commission investigated and collected reports upon the phenomenal events, and its report, "Krakatau," edited by R. D. M. Verbeek, the eminent geologist and director of mines to the Dutch government, was published at Batavia in 1885, in a quarto volume of 500 pages, in Dutch and French editions, accompanied by charts and an atlas of colored plates that make clear the whole course of the spectacular phenomena.

The Royal Society of Great Britain appointed a "Krakatoa Committee," composed of thirteen of its most eminent geologists, meteorologists, seismists, and specialists in such lines, to collect data concerning this most remarkable eruption of the century, and its report, a quarto volume of 475 pages, edited by G. J. Symons, and published in London in 1888, embodies the result of their inquiries.

M. René Breon's report to the French Minister of Public Instruction was published by his government, and he contributed papers to "La Nature," in the April and May numbers for the year 1885. Mr. H. O. Forbes, the naturalist, was in Batavia in the first weeks of Krakatau's activity, and the record of his excursion to the island and his observations was read to the Royal Geographic Society, and afterward published in vol. vi. of "Proceedings" (1884, pp. 129, 142).

The many official reports and accounts of the Krakatau eruption are best epitomized in Findlay's "Sailing Directory for the Indian Archipelago and China" (p. 78):

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In an old Dutch work there is an account of a violent eruption on Krakatau in 1680, since which time it appears to have been quiescent until May 21, 1883, when smoke was observed rising from it, and it quickly became very active. On the 23d a vessel encountered a large accumulation of pumice off Flat Cape, Sumatra; and on the 24th volcanic cinders fell on the island of Timor, twelve hundred miles distant.

For the next eight or nine weeks the eruption continued with great vigor increasing in activity on August 21st, preparatory to its final great effort. On the evening of the 26th some violent explosions took place, audible at Batavia, eighty miles distant; and between 5 and 7 A. M. on the 27th there was a still more gigantic explosion, followed about 10 A. M. by a detonation so terrific as to be heard even in India, Ceylon, Manilla, and the west coast of Australia, over two thousand miles away. Following on these came a succession of enormous waves, which completely swept the shores of the strait, utterly destroying Anjer, Telok Betong, and numerous villages, the loss of life being officially estimated at over thirty-six thousand souls. The coasts and islands in the vicinity were buried under a layer of mud and ashes.

The effects of this eruption were felt all over the world. Ashes fell at Singapore, 519 miles distant, Bengkalis, 568 miles distant, and the Cocos Islands, 764 miles to the southwestward; and undulations of the sea were recorded at Ceylon, Aden, Mauritius, South Africa, Australia, and in the Pacific. A wave of atmospherical disturbance was also generated, which has been traced three times completely round the world, traveling at the speed of sound. Many months afterward pumice was cast ashore on Zanzibar Island and Madagascar, supposed to have drifted from the Strait of Sunda.

The height of the column of steam and smoke given off by the volcano is estimated at from nine to twelve miles,¹ the consequence being that large quantities of fine dust were discharged into the upper regions of the atmosphere, giving rise to those

¹ The Royal Society gives an estimate of seventeen miles as the height of this great column of smoke.

beautiful sunset effects observed all over the world for several months afterward. The amount of solid matter ejected has been computed at over four and a quarter cubic miles.

Such a convulsion has naturally greatly altered the features of the surrounding sea and islands. The northern portion of Krakatau has completely disappeared, and several banks and shoals have been formed between it and Bezee Island, rendering the passage between almost impracticable. It has not otherwise affected the navigation of Sunda Strait, and its activity has now ceased (1889). . . .

Krakatau Island, lying in the middle of Sunda Strait, has been reduced in size from thirteen to six square miles, the site of the northern part of the island now being covered by deep water, no bottom being obtained at 164 fathoms at one spot. The island is now three and a half miles in length, east and west, and two miles wide at its east end. Mount Radaka, its fine conical peak, which still remains, rising boldly up to the height of 2657 feet, may be seen at a considerable distance, and serves as a fairway mark for ships entering the strait from the westward. It is in latitude $6^{\circ} 9' S.$, longitude $105^{\circ} 27' E.$, and its northern side is now a sheer precipice about 2550 feet high. . . . The island was uninhabited, but visited occasionally by fishermen. . . .

Verlaten Island has increased in size from about one and a half to four and a half square miles. Lang Island has altered somewhat in shape, but not much in size. The round islet named Polish Hat has disappeared, but another islet now lies three quarters of a mile west a half-mile from its south point, with deep water between.

Bezee or Tamarind Island, lying ten and a half miles north by east from Krakatau peak, has altered a little in shape, but not in size, and appears to be the northern limit of the volcanic disturbance. . . . Bezee Island formerly produced pepper. . . . The village was on the east side opposite Little Tamarind Island, but the volcanic eruption smothered the island with mud and ashes.

Although we traveled on the island through all the November weeks, we did not experience any of the

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sensational downpours promised for the beginning of the rainy season, nor the terrific thunder-storms warranted to rend the heavens at the turn of the monsoon, nor any inconvenience or disarrangement of plans through the first instalments of the annual precipitation. The black clouds of the Java Sea did not suddenly envelop our ship in such sheets of rain that the vessel was forced to lay to, the lookout in the bows unable to see ten feet ahead of him, and the double sail-cloth awnings over the decks serving no more purpose than so much gauze. The rain did not descend in a flood or cloud-burst's fury at precisely three o'clock every afternoon, penetrating carriage-curtains and -aprons, filling the carriage-boxes like tanks, and saturating every garment and article. Nor any more did we play billiards by lightning, without lamps, like that British planter who eventually scared away a party of Americans by his account of thunder-storms in Java. This British resident assured the tourists that at his Preanger plantation the thunder-claps shook the house, rocked the furniture, and stopped clocks, and that he had often turned out the reeling lamps for safety's sake, and continued his games of billiards by the lightning's incessant, blinding green glare. And the Americans believed it, and remained away from Java—British humor and American credulity matched to equally surprising extremes.

There were gentle, intermittent drizzles and light showers on several days; many days when the gray skies sulked and seemed about to weep; but the only hard showers were at night. The one vaunted sensational, tropical downpour, with blue-and-green lightning's illumination, made my last Batavian midnight

memorable, and put me at last in line with my climatic expectations. Yet that was at the end of November, when the monsoon was supposed to have sent off its irregular fireworks and settled down to the fixed program of a three-o'clock shower every afternoon, in order to precipitate its annual eighty inches of rain.

Even the thermometer disappointed one in this land comprised between the parallels of 5° and 8° south of the equator. Not once in my stay did it register as great a heat as I have once seen it register in Sitka in July— 94° Fahrenheit; but as the column of mercury is often small gage or warrant for one's own sensations, he must believe, even if with mental reservations, that Batavia's mean temperature was but 78.69° for twelve years, with a monthly mean range of but two degrees. If one has been out in the sun at that hour, he feels skeptical about Batavia's annual average noonday temperature being but 83° , all of four degrees cooler than Samarang's and Sourabaya's average noon temperature. He may believe that the thermometer very seldom falls below 70° or rises above 90° , but a quality in the air, a weight and appreciable humidity, make Batavia's mean, exhausting, lifeless 83° noondays the climax of one's discomfort.

With the upas-tree, the great snakes, the tigers, the pirates, and the good coffee exposed as myths; the white ants never eating out the contents of a trunk overnight; mildew ignoring the luggage left for over a fortnight at Buitenzorg; and the trunks left at Singapore for more than a month equally innocent of fungus-mold, I felt that the tropics had defrauded me

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a bit—or else that I had lent too willing an ear to returned travelers' imaginations. Taking my own experience as proof, there might be written a brief chapter about snakes to match that famous one in Horrebrow's "History of Iceland." But the disillusionment of disillusionments awaited us on the borders of Bantam, when the last Batavian day brought information that our so-called tiny bantam cock is not from Bantam at all. It was first seen on board a Japanese junk trading at Bantam in the long ago, and the Malays, who are natural and long-descended cock-fighters, saw in these little fowls combatants more spirited than any of their own breed, and of more manageable size. The true bantam cocks to the province born are nearly as large as turkeys; long ago Dr. Marsden told of their being as large as Norfolk bustards, and of their standing high enough to peck off the dinner-table, and said that when they sat down on the first joint of the leg they were taller than any common fowls. The introduction of the pretty Japanese fowls revolutionized cock-fighting, and the Dutch imported them through their Nagasaki factory, and introduced them to Europe.

The equator was proved not such a terrible thing as it had been made out to be—a thing that might be spoken of very disrespectfully because of that misplaced awe and veneration; and the tropics not at all as astonishing as they used to be, when illustrated books of travel, museum collections and models, and exposition villages had not made their life and scenery so familiar; when hothouses had not brought even orchids to common acquaintance, and Northern markets

displaying oranges and bananas as commonly and regularly as apples or potatoes.

With the other India—the whole continent of the real, the greater, or British India—before us, we could not delay on the Netherlands isle; and that strange, haunting, indefinite fear, the dread of some unknown, undefinable evil, that shadows and oppresses one so in the tropics, asserted itself more strongly as we approached Batavia. One is not sure whether this vague fear which possesses one under the line is due to the sense of extreme distance, to dread of the many diseases that lie in wait, to fear of the sudden deaths of so many kinds that may snatch one in the lands where the sun swings nearest, or to the peril of volcanic forces that may instantly overwhelm one in some disaster like that of Krakatau. At least, there was always a sensation of oppression, a dread of some impending danger in the midst of one's enjoyment, and an unconscious looking-forward to free breathing and the sensation of safety, when once across the line again, back to the grand route and the world again, safe under the British flag at friendly Singapore, at home again with the English language.

Yet Java, the peerless gem in "that magnificent empire of Insul-Inde which winds about the equator like a garland of emeralds," is the ideal tropical island, the greenest, the most beautiful, and the most exquisitely cultivated spot in the East, the most picturesque and satisfactory bit of the tropics anywhere near the world's great routes of travel. Now that the dark days of Dutch rule are ended and enlightened modes prevail; now that the culture system has developed the

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island's resources and made it all one exquisite, fruitful garden, and the colonists have begun to take an interest in uncovering and protecting the ancient monuments, the interest and attractions of Java are greater each year. It is alike the scientist's greatest storehouse and the traveler's unequalled tropical pleasure-resort and playground in the East. The antiquities have been merely scratched, explorations in that line are only well begun, leaving to archæologists and anthropologists a field of incalculable richness—more especially to those bent upon arriving at some solution of the great puzzle, some proof of Asiatic and American contact in pre-Columbian times. The puzzling resemblance of the older Javanese ruins to those of Central America has yet to be explained, and the alluring theory of migration from the rich “food-ponds” of the waters within the archipelago to other and farther inclosed seas teeming with fishes, until the Malays had followed with the great currents up one shore of the Pacific Ocean and down the other, must be proved. Dutch scientists naturally desire to explore and exploit this treasure-house of Java for themselves; but with a questioning world and many eager inquirers bent on solving all the mysteries and problems of race origin and migrations, the prize must be won by the swiftest.

If Baedeker or Murray would only go to Java and kindly light the tourist's way; if the Dutch government would relax the useless vexations of the toelatings-kaart system, and the colonists welcome the visitor in more kindly spirit, Java would rank, as it deserves to, as a close second to Japan, an oasis in

travel, an island of beauty and delight to the increasing number of round-the-world travelers, who each year are discouraged from visiting the country by less heedful ones who have ventured there.

Whether, as pessimists foretell, a Mohammedan rebellion shall desolate the isle; whether it remains in Dutch leading-strings, arrives at even the limited independence of a British colony, or succumbs to Germany's colonial ambitions, as the French so freely prophesy, Java is certain soon to loom larger in the world's view, and for a time at least to occupy the stage.