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The Great Volcano of Matavanu

Continued from page 38.

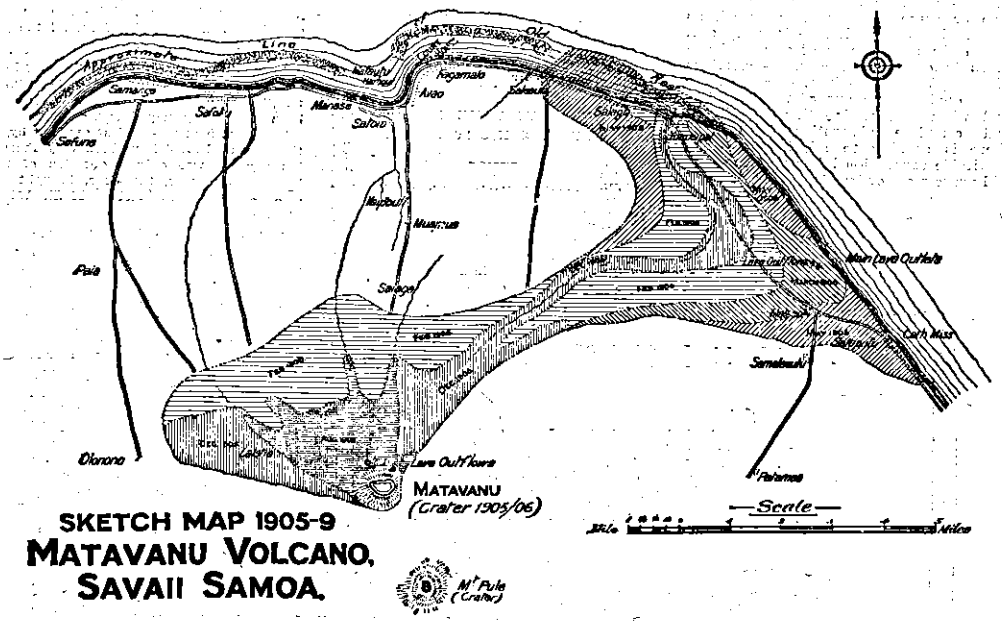
occupied by a lake of liquid lava and of such extreme fluidity that it continually beats in surging waves against the walls, where splashes retain their heat and brilliant colour for some time. The surface is in a constant state of ebullition, some of the boilings rising in veritable fountains of liquid incandescent basalt of 10, 20, or even at times 50ft. high. The whole mass of lava is as a brilliant white heat, visible as such even in bright sunlight, but a dark scum is continually forming on the surface. These pieces of scum, like ice-flows, break up and flow down to the north-eastern end of the crater, where they and the liquid lava disappear down a hole or rather a tunnel, at the foot of the cliff. This tunnel is perhaps 30 feet wide. Its roof is quite low, and is nearly touched by the surface of the lava, which rushes under it at a steep slope with the velocity of a cataract.

The outflow of lava into the sea is one of the most striking features of the eruption, and it seems to have been going on, with the exception of one day, since 1905. The lava on descending to the low ground, has spread itself like a fan, and by successive flows has covered the coast at different times for a distance of nine miles, destroying four villages (Salago, Toapaipai, Mahicola and Sataputu) and the buggy-room between them, also the whole of the town of Saleaula except two houses.

Having twice tried from the land to examine the place where the lava fell into the sea, and having been each time stopped by hot lava flows, I determined to make my investigations from a boat. The streams vary much from day to day, and even from hour to hour. When I first saw them at night from the steamer Atua, there were twelve visible by their own light; a second time, seen from a native schooner, they were fewer and quite different. On a third occasion, when I got as near as possible in a boat, the lava was flowing in four large and distinct streams and more would probably have been visible at night. We got as near as possible without melting the pitch-caulking of the boat. Where the discharges were most active explosions were almost continuous, and the whole was obscured by clouds of steam from which fragments of red-hot lava and showers of black sand were seen to fall.

German Policy in Persia.

Dr. E. J. Dillon, writing in the "Contemporary," describes a well-authenticated" plan which has been communicated to him as to the course of German policy in Persia. "Persia," his informant remarked, "was divided up into three spheres by the Anglo-Russian Convention, the northern being Russia's domain of influence, the southern that in which British interests and influence are predominant, and the neutral belt, which is a political Tom Tiddler's ground. Now if Russia can veto a certain class of concessions in the north and Great Britain another of the same kind in the south, on the ground that they are incompatible with their respective political privileges there, who is there to say nay to Germany's designs in the middle belt? No Great Power has reserved it as a sphere of influence or interest. Neither political, nor commercial, nor railway, nor mining claims have been put forward by any nation to any part of that territory. Therefore, from the point of view of the Anglo-Russian Convention, it is res nullius, and Germany can enter in without let or difficulty. But consideration for the great Mohammedan nation of Iran will move her to proceed on quite other lines. Recognising the right of the Persian people to give and withhold privileges and concessions of all kinds in their own realm, she will negotiate with the Government, and content herself with what is 'voluntarily' offered her, and in return will tender her services to the Persian nation as champion against all who harbour designs against its integrity. That would involve, as already entailed, a condominium of three. The result will be to take Persia out of the guardianship of two Powers, and place it under the protection of three, one of whom has an interest to check the action of the others."



SKETCH MAP 1905-9
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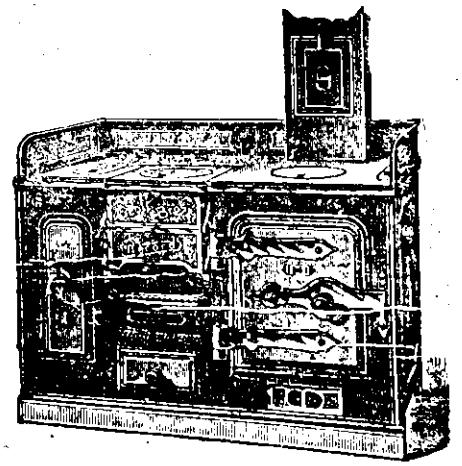

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