



The Martinique Eruptions

Mont Pelée and the Tragedy of Martinique by Angelo Heilprin

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river-diary as a check to his own. It should be mentioned that chapter iii. gives an excellent account of the general character of the region and its inhabitants, while the work is profusely illustrated by photographs, and some striking paintings by the author are also reproduced.

THE MARTINIQUE ERUPTIONS.

‘Mont Pelée and the Tragedy of Martinique.’ By Angelo Heilprin. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1903.

Already a considerable mass of literature has accumulated on the subject of the recent eruptions in the West Indies, and additions are being made to it daily. Prof. Heilprin's book is a very welcome contribution, as it contains a great deal of first-hand information which the author collected during two visits to Martinique, made expressly for the purpose of studying its celebrated volcano. He gives a full and clear summary of the events that preceded and led up to the great catastrophe of May 8, 1902, and though most of the facts have already been published, his *résumé* is interesting. The really novel part of the book begins with his first visit to Martinique shortly after the second eruption, which on May 20 completed the destruction of St. Pierre. Prof. Heilprin was the first to reach the actual summit of Montagne Pelée after the disaster, and, though he was baffled by the clouds which hang around the mountain-top, this only led him to return next day, when, for a few minutes, standing on the lip of the crater, he was able to get a glimpse of the abyss that lay beneath his feet.

In the end of August he returned to renew his investigations, and the chapters in which he describes his experiences during that visit make thrilling reading. From the eastern base of the mountain, which at that time was green and flourishing, he started again for the summit. The volcano was in a condition of great uproar. After his party had ascended to a considerable height, they were enveloped in dense cloud. In front of them the crater roared, and through the air blocks of rock were falling with a whistling noise, landing on the slopes with a dull hollow thud. With indomitable courage he pushed on, and a temporary rift in the clouds enabled him to see a vast column of ash-laden steam rising from the crater to a height of several miles. Finally, he had to beat a retreat, with the secret of Pelée's crater still unsolved.

That night an eruption broke out, and the deadly black cloud wiped out the villages of Morne Rouge and Ajoupa Bouillon, killing about 2000 of their inhabitants. Prof. Heilprin was in a mansion house on an estate close at hand, but escaped without injury, as apparently the cloud passed overhead. The description of his experiences during that day and night are of the greatest interest and scientific value.

A very brief chapter is given to the eruptions of the Soufrière in St. Vincent and one to the volcanic relations of the Caribbean chain. In another the author discusses fully the evidence that the Plinian eruption of Vesuvius, which destroyed the towns of Herculaneum and Pompeii, was of the same type as those of Montagne Pelée, and arrives at the conclusion that they were similar in their essential characters. The book contains comparatively little geological or mineralogical detail, and is evidently meant for the general reader. Its language is vigorous and picturesque, and it is well illustrated by reproductions from photographs, many of which were taken by the author or his companions. Its descriptions of the scenery of Martinique and the appearance of the devastated country are very vivid.

J. S. F.