

A GLIMPSE BEYOND THE EARTH.

The tremendous volcanic explosion which has just occurred in the Indian Archipelago, is well calculated to shake the faith of those who have been taught to look upon the earth as the embodiment of solidity and stability. "The solid ground," and "the everlasting hills," are familiar expressions, but they seem to lose their significance when we behold the ground rent asunder and sink beneath the sea; mountains split from peak to base; islands disappearing, and now craters thrust up through the sea bottom, while with deafening thunders more than a dozen huge volcanoes pour forth rivers of molten rock and clouds of dust and ashes, darkening the heavens for hundreds of miles around, and lighting the earth with the glare of their fires. Amid such scenes it is not wonderful if men fear that the shell of the earth is going to pieces.

But the outbreak in Java, formidable and awful as it is, appears a small affair beside the convulsions which anybody who will take the trouble to visit an observatory may witness in some of the other orbs of the solar system. At this moment there are visible upon the disk of the sun the effects of commotions which would not merely shatter an island, but would involve the whole round earth in blazing ruins. It is not necessary, however, to look to the sun, where the final, fiery processes of that nebular contraction which it is believed gave birth to the solar system, are proceeding with an energy of which we can have no adequate conception, in order to find examples of the disrupting forces that are at present manifesting their power in other worlds than ours on a scale which belittles the Javan eruption. On Jupiter, for instance, the telescope reveals the most astonishing changes continually going on in the appearance of the surface of the planet, and which can only be produced by forces of a magnitude unequalled upon the earth. Astronomers are just now watching Jupiter, which is fast drawing away from the neighborhood of the sun in the morning sky, with intense interest, in order to determine whether one of the most surprising appearances that were ever witnessed upon that planet is yet visible. Late in the Summer of 1878 a faint gray spot of an elongated shape, presented itself in the southern hemisphere of Jupiter. In a few weeks it had changed in color to a deep red, and had become so conspicuous that even small telescopes easily showed it. Singular phenomena were observed around it. The great dark belt that encircles the planet south of the equator, was seen to be bent away from this fiery looking spot in the most curious manner. The spot was pointed at the ends, and surrounded at times by a sort of whitish aureole. It was not less than 30,000 miles long, and 6,000 miles broad. After long watching, astronomers found that this red spot took a longer time to make its journey around the planet than some light spots which were seen near the equator of Jupiter. What could this extraordinary object be? Nobody could tell, although a dozen theories were suggested. Last fall the great spot began to fade. A thin veil, as of smoke or cloud, seemed to have been drawn over it. The veil grew thicker, and the spot lost its red color. Last winter only a few of the largest telescopes in the world could reveal a slight trace of the fading spot. Then Jupiter went behind the sun, and now that he has reappeared within the range of telescopes, it is probable that not even the most powerful will show where the red spot was. The observation of such a phenomenon as this on Jupiter is interesting to the inhabitants of the earth because there is reason to believe that Jupiter is now in a state of planetary development that was passed by the globe upon which we live ages and ages ago. So, watching the changing appearance of Jupiter's surface, we are able to compare an early stage of the earth's history, when it was subject to throes that were felt from centre to circumference, or when perhaps it was yet a molten ball surrounded by a sea of dense vapors, with its present condition, when volcanic eruptions are yet able to sink islands and overwhelm cities, but can, after all, only shake and split its crust here and there, without being able to crush the rocky framework.

The great volcanic eruption in Java suggests another curious consideration. If we accept the conclusion of those who think that at least two of the sun's family of worlds beside the earth—namely, Venus and Mars—are now inhabited, we must admit the possibility that the Javan convulsion has aroused the interest of other beings besides the inhabitants of the earth, for with telescopes as powerful as those of terrestrial astronomers the supposed dwellers on Mars and Venus could easily see the cloud caused by the eruption. From the moon it might have been seen with the naked eye if there had been anybody there to look. This seems a fanciful speculation, and yet the idea of the inhabitants of different worlds which belong to one solar system watching and wondering about unusual appearances which these worlds may present, is not unreasonable when once we admit the possibility of more than one world being inhabited. At any rate, whether or not there are beings in Mars and Venus who are observing and speculating about the phenomena presented by the earth, the studies of those who inspect the changing shapes and colors upon Jupiter, the beautiful panorama of Saturn's rings, the waxing and waning of the snow-like spots around the poles of Mars, and all the other wonderful phenomena which these different worlds present, need no excuse. To the modern astronomer the motto of the old friars, "Unus non sufficit orbis," has a new meaning. The intellectual aspirations of man lead him not only to overrun the whole earth, risking his life, like Pliny, in investigating the particulars of a volcanic eruption, and, like Sir John Franklin, in trying to reach the ice-guarded pole, but also impel him to penetrate the nature and history of other worlds, which his eyes behold though his feet can never tread them.

KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.—In the days of John, King of Atri, an ancient city of Abruzzo, there was a bell put up, which any one who had received any injury went and rang, and the king assembled the wise men chosen for the purpose, that justice might be done. It happened that after the bell had been put up a long time, the rope was worn out, and a piece of wild vine was made use of to lengthen it. Now there was a Knight of Atri who had a noble charger which had become unserviceable through old age, so that, to avoid the expense of feeding him, he turned him loose upon the common. The horse, driven to hunger, raised his mouth to the vine to munch it, and pulling it, the bell rang. The judges assembled to consider the petition of the horse, which seemed to demand justice. They decreed that the knight whom he had served in his youth should feed him in his old age, a sentence which the King confirmed under heavy penalty.

THE POSTSCRIPT.—George Selwyn once said in company that no lady could write a letter without adding a postscript. "My next letter shall show you your mistake," said one who was present. Soon afterwards he received a letter from this lady. On the last page he found she had written,—“P. S. Who was right, now, you or I?”

At a recent wedding, where the bride was very dilatory at arriving at the church, a lady remarked concerning the affair, "Well, the idea of that woman being late in getting here, when she has been waiting twenty-six years for just such a chance as this."

"Those birds flying over yonder are aquatic birds. I suppose?" asked the young man in the seal brown suit, of the captain of a lake steamer. "No, they aint!" was the scornful reply. "Them's ducks."

Professor looking at his watch "As we have a few minutes, I shall be glad to answer any question that any one may wish to ask." Student—"What time is it, please?"