

THE SEMI-WEEKLY TELEGRAPH, ST. JOHN N. B., MAY 14, 1902.

FORTY THOUSAND PEOPLE BURIED BY BURNING LAVA AT ST. PIERRE.

One of the Greatest Disasters of History Came to Martinique's Metropolis in the Short Space of Three Minutes, Destruction Upon the People Ere They Knew It.

Eighteen Vessels Burned and Sunk, the Crews Perishing Almost to a Man—But Twenty People of the Town's Population Are Known to Have Saved Their Lives.

Schooner Ocean Traveller, Reported From St. John, Was Within a Mile of the Scene—"Glimpses of Hell" the Description Given by Survivors--Relief Vessels Hurrying From Nearby Ports--Other Islands of West Indies Suffer.

St. Thomas, D. W. I., May 9.—It is now estimated that 40,000 persons perished as a result of the volcanic eruption in the Island of Martinique.

ONLY 20 ESCAPED.

Storm of Steam, Mud and Fire Enveloped the City—Eighteen Vessels Burned and Sunk.

Washington, May 9.—The following cablegram has just been received at the State department:

Point-A-Pitre, May 9.—At 7 o'clock a. m. on the 8th inst., a storm of steam, mud and fire enveloped the city and community. Not more than 20 persons escaped with their lives. Eighteen vessels were burned and sunk with all on board, including four American vessels and a steamer from Quebec named Rosanna. The United States consul and family are reported among the victims. A war vessel has come to Guadeloupe for provisions and will leave at 5 tomorrow.

AYME, Consul. The State department has been receiving despatches from commercial houses in New York asking that a warship be sent at once to Martinique to afford relief. The matter is under consideration.

ERUPTION THREE MINUTES!

Mont Pelee Flow of Lava Destroyed District in Four Mile Radius.

London, May 9.—A despatch to the Daily Mail from Point-A-Pitre, Island of Guadeloupe (French West Indies) dated yesterday, says:

"The Mont Pelee crater ejected yesterday molten rocks and ashes during three minutes and completely destroyed St. Pierre and the districts within a four mile radius. All the inhabitants were burned."

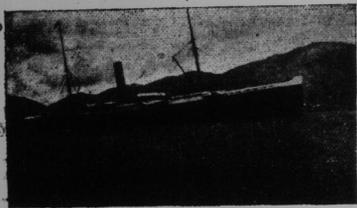
"About eight passengers from the Rosanna for the Quebec Steamship line were saved by the French cruiser Suchet. The inhabitants of the southern district of the island who were dependent upon St. Pierre for provisions are menaced by famine."

GLIMPSSES OF HELL.

So the Scene is Described by Survivors of British Steamer.

London, May 9.—A despatch to the Daily Mail from Jamaica says:

"The first intimation of a disaster (at Martinique) was the breaking of the cable on Tuesday. The French cable to Martinique from Puerto Plate was broken Wednesday. Cable communication with all the northern islands is stopped. The survivors of the British steamer



LOST STEAMER ROSANNA. Photo by W. E. Mason.

Roddam describes the scene at St. Pierre as being 'glimpses of hell,' beguiling description. The Roddam's men were killed chiefly by molten lava.

"The Rosanna was wrecked in a terrible upsurge of land and sea. The whole crew perished."

"Two ships were lost with all on board in an attempt to approach Martinique."

On Other Islands. A despatch from St. Thomas dated May 7, said that advices received there from the island of St. Vincent (British West Indies), announced that for some days

earthquakes had been experienced in the neighborhood of the Soufriere crater, which had been smoking and rumbling. The people in the vicinity of the volcano were leaving for places of safety.

It was also reported that the volcanic craters on the island of Dominica were showing signs of activity.

A ridge of high, well wooded volcanic hills stretches through the island of St. Vincent, from north to south. Volcanic rocks and hot springs abound on the island and Dominica where there are large deposits of sulphur.

St. Pierre, the principal town of Martinique, which has been destroyed by volcanic fire, had numerous public buildings and schools, a fine theatre and a botanic garden. Its extensive roadstead was defended by several forts.

St. Pierre, which was the birthplace of Josephine, first empress of France, has one of the finest harbors in the West Indies and had a dry dock capable of accommodating vessels of 5,000 tons. A beautiful statue of the Empress Josephine was erected in one of the squares of St. Pierre.

In 1767 about 1,600 people were killed by an earthquake in Martinique. In 1839 the then capital, Fort Royal, now known as Fort de France, was visited by an earthquake which destroyed about half the town, caused damage throughout the island and killed some 700 persons.

Admiral Cervera's squadron was first reported on this side of the Atlantic at St. Pierre.

Volcanic Dust at Barbados. Bridgetown, Island of Barbados, B. W. I., May 9.—Volcanic dust from the eruption in the Island of St. Vincent is still falling here. The roads and houses are covered an inch thick.

[The Island of Barbados is more than 100 miles from the Island of St. Vincent.]

Guadeloupe Reported Safe. Portland, Me., May 10.—J. C. Hamlen, in reply to one sent by J. H. Hamlen & Son to one of their correspondents:

"Point-A-Pitre, to Hamlen, Portland: 'Horrible calamity. St. Pierre completely destroyed. All the country ruined. The Island of Guadeloupe, Guadeloupe safe. Organizing assistance.'"

Steamer Rosanna's Loss. New York, May 9.—The New York agents of the Quebec Steamship Company received a cablegram this afternoon from St. Lucia saying:

"Rosanna lost in earthquake eruption last night."

There was milling machinery on the Rosanna, the property of the Red Cross Steamship Company, to the value of \$22,000.

L. W. & P. Armstrong, who own the steamship Talsman, received a cable from St. Lucia which stated that no communication could be obtained with St. Thomas except by sailboat. The Talsman left for Barbados on April 17 and her owners

thought that perhaps she had been affected by the earthquake, but no report of her loss has been received.

ST. VINCENT SUFFERS.

Earthquakes Frequent and Volcano Active, But No Damage So Far.

London, May 9.—A despatch to the Reuter Telegram Company from Kingston (Jamaica), after giving the details of the

Martinique disaster, already known, says:

"Thousands were killed at St. Pierre, where a terrible panic prevailed. The eruption began Saturday, May 3, when St. Pierre was covered with ashes and appeared to be enveloped in fog. The flow of lava continued until Wednesday, May 7."

The message adds: "In the Island of St. Vincent the soufriere (volcano) is active and earthquakes are frequent. But so far no damage has been done."

In response to the request of Governor Llewellyn (of the Windward Islands) the British second-class cruiser Indefatigable has been dispatched from the Island of Trinidad to the Island of St. Vincent.

THE OCEAN TRAVELLER.

Schooner Known Here Was Within a Mile of the Scene of Disaster—Saw Volcano Explode.

St. Thomas, D. W. I., May 9.—The British schooner Ocean Traveller (of St. John, N. B.), arrived at the island of Dominica, British West Indies, at 3 o'clock this afternoon.

She had been visiting for the last few days at St. John, N. B., and was en route home from England.

The younger Mr. Hamlin also had spent a great part of his life on the southern island and had many relatives and friends in the island city. When the early cablegram from the commander of the French cruiser Suchet came today confirming the alarming reports of last night he said:

"Beyond a question this is one of the most terrible catastrophes the world has ever seen. St. Pierre had a population of at least 35,000. Three-fourths of these were colored natives of the island, while the remainder was made up of intelligent, well-to-do French people."

St. Pierre was built on the side of a hill and when the volcano burst forth and sent an irresistible overwhelming flood of lava down the mountain side (where could hardly have been any escape from the molten torrent, and the inhabitants probably went to their doom almost before they knew what was upon them.

A Portland Schooner Possibly There. Boston, May 9.—The schooner Anna E. J. Morse, Captain Parker, arrived at St. Pierre, Martinique, April 24, from Philadelphia, with a cargo of coal, and fears are expressed for her safety as it is thought she was in port there at the time of the destruction of the city. The Morse was owned by J. S. Winslow & Co., of Portland (Me.).

Island is Volcanic. Eighty per cent of Inhabitants Negroes—Last Eruption of Mont Pelee in 1851.

Martinique belongs to a chain of the Lesser Antilles. It constitutes a French colony and lies 23 miles south of Dominica and 22 miles north of St. Lucia. It is 43 miles long, 19 miles wide, and the surface covers 245,000 acres, or 380 square miles.

There are two clusters of volcanic mountains, one in the north and one in the south, with a chain of lower heights between them. They abound in deep ravines and precipitous slopes. There are many large streams which flow from these mountains and the rainy season rarely passes without a series of destructive torrents.

The east coast of the island, exposed to the full sweep of the Atlantic, is a succession of inlets, headlands, islands and rocks, while the south coast is much more regular, bold and steep. The west coast alone presents a site for a town of any commercial importance, and here is situated St. Pierre. The island had a population of about 200,000, and its chief articles of export are sugar, coffee, cotton and cocoa.

St. Pierre is the principal town, and the only fortified port on the island. It has no harbor, properly speaking, but the roadstead is protected except during the periodical hurricanes, when its exposed position makes it very dangerous.

The town is partly on low and insubstantial lands, partly on picturesque hills, where the residences are placed among the trees and flowers. The botanical garden of St. Pierre is in the finest of the West Indies. There is also an old Catholic college there which attracts tourists.

St. Pierre was settled by the French in 1635. The Empress Josephine was born in Martinique and ranks as the most famous personage figuring in the annals of the island.

The highest mountain peak on the island is the Morne Pelee, 4,530 feet, near the northern end. It is a volcano, but seldom active, its last eruption occurring in 1851. Other peaks are evidently ancient volcanoes, to which the island owes its origin.

The hurricanes which sweep over that portion of the world from June to October have been the cause of much destruction. In the great hurricane of 1780 over 9,000 people lost their lives.

Martinique has a governor and a council elected by limited suffrage, and sends a senator and two deputies to the French parliament. Slavery existed upon the island until 1848, and probably 80 per cent of the present population are colored.

Portland Firm Loses. Portland, Me., May 9.—Among the heavy losses in property by the extinction of St. Pierre, are J. H. Hamlin & Co., of this city, who had a large branch office there. J. C. Hamlin, the junior member of the firm, said today: "While our actual property loss will be confined to the value of structure on Rue Fetti Versailles, it naturally strikes indirectly at our large business with the island through that port of entry. At this time we fortunately had no shipping at St. Pierre, all our vessels having discharged their cargoes and sailed from the port. This, however, is but an after consideration. The catastrophe itself is something terrible to contemplate."

Probably no man in the United States had a wider acquaintance in St. Pierre, and in fact on the whole island, than J. H. Hamlin, the senior member of the firm. For nearly half a century he had been in trade with the island and maintained a branch house at St. Pierre and for more than 40 years he had spent the winters there on an epidemic of smallpox, and when two or three weeks ago he started for England with his daughter. To this fact, they undoubtedly owe their lives, as the house where they resided probably was destroyed by the flood of fire that devastated the city. Mr. Hamlin and his

daughter now are en route home from England.

Survivors Horribly Burned. Throughout Thursday the heat in the vicinity of St. Pierre was so intense and the stream of flowing lava was so unrelenting that it was impossible to approach the town during the early part of the day. As evening approached the French cruiser Sabat, after a heroic battle with the heat, suffocation and sulphur fumes, succeeded in making a dash toward the shore, nearing the land close enough to enable her to take off 30 sur-

vivors of the disaster, all of whom were horribly burned and mutilated.

St. Pierre at that time was an absolute smoky waste, concealing 30,000 corpses, whose rapid decomposition necessitated, in some cases, instantly compelling their cremation, which was only partially accomplished by the lava.

450 Rescued from the Vicinity. The inhabitants of Port De France were panic stricken, the morning of the disaster, when the sky suddenly blackened until it was as dark as at midnight. The sea shrank back 90 yards, but rain began to fall, while gravel, the size of walnuts poured down on the town. This lasted about 15 minutes and then the town began to resume its normal aspect. The 450 survivors who were brought here yesterday from the vicinity of St. Pierre by the French cable repair ship Pouter Guertier came from the town of Le Precheur, where, surrounded on all sides by flowing lava, they were nearly roasted to death and expected momentarily to be engulfed.

Work of Destruction Continuous. The work of relief is progressing here on the most extensive scale possible, but in anticipation of disturbances, the treasury building and the warehouses are guarded by troops.

The latest reports received here showed that lava continues to pour down the slopes of the mountain, slowly engulfing the whole north side of the island, while fresh crevasses are continually opening.

NOVA SCOTIA'S FAREWELL. Captain Muggah of Sydney Waved Good Bye as His Vessel Sank in Terrific Explosion.

Mr. Pisonis is believed to be the sole survivor of the 40,000 inhabitants of St. Pierre who remained there for the town and all the shipping in the port have been utterly destroyed. The West Indian Telegraph company's repairing steamer Grappler, going first, the Quebec liner Rosanna, Captain Muggah well to the Roddam as his vessel sank with a terrific explosion.

(Captain Muggah is a native of Sydney, C. B.)

Nearly Suffocated Passing St. Vincent. Willemstad, Island of Curacao, May 10.—The Italian steamer Pedemonte, which arrived this morning at Equatoria, reports that while passing near the Island of St. Vincent Thursday night, her deck was covered to a depth of two inches with ashes and her passengers were nearly suffocated with the smell of sulphur. During Thursday all along the coast, especially in the Gulf of Paria, subterranean noises were heard. The Indians were terrified.

DETAILS OF ST. VINCENT DISASTER. Great Loss of Life There is Believed—People Flee to Kingstown—Vapor Eight Miles High from Crater, Then Streams of Lava.

Kingston, Island of St. Vincent, B. W. I., Saturday, May 10.—After numerous earthquakes during the preceding fortnight, accompanied by subterranean noises in the direction of the Soufriere volcano, in the northwestern part of the island, a loud explosion occurred Monday last from the crater and the water in the crater lake ascended in a stupendous cloud of steam and exploded heavily. The noises grew louder continually till Wednesday morning, when the old crater, three miles in circumference, and the new crater formed by the last eruption, belched smoke and stones, forcing the residents of Wallibon and Richmond Valley beneath the volcano, to flee to Chateau De'air for refuge.

The thunderous noises, which were continually increasing, were heard in neighboring islands 200 miles away.

At midday the crater ejected enormous columns of steamy vapor, rising majestically eight miles high and expanding into wonderful shapes, resembling enormous cauliflower, gigantic wheels and beautiful flower forms, all streaked up and down and crosswise with vivid flashes of lightning, awing the beholder and impressing the mind with fear. The mountain labored to rid itself of a mass of molten lava which later flowed over in six streams, down the sides of the volcano, and the greater noises following united in one great, continuous roar all evening, through the night to Thursday morning, accompanied with black rain, falling dust and furious scoria attended with midnight darkness all Wednesday, creating feelings of fear and anxious suspense. On the morning of Friday there was a fresh eruption and in the rest of the day, the lava, after covering the island, in some places two feet deep.

The crater is still active as this despatch is sent and great loss of life is believed to have occurred. The lava has destroyed several districts with their livestock.

People are fleeing to this town, streams are dried up and in many places a food and water famine is threatened. The government is feeding numbers of sufferers from the outbreak.

Great physical changes have taken place in the neighborhood of the Soufriere.

Several districts have not yet been heard from and the scene of the eruption is unapproachable. Every hour brings sadder news. The nurses and doctors are overworked. It is impossible to give full details at present.

As a result of the disaster on this island

and was appointed from Massachusetts as consul at Seychelles Islands in 1871 and later served as consul at Port Louis, Mauritius, Rouen, France and Batavia. He was appointed consul at Martinique in 1900. The vice consul at Martinique is Amedee Testart who was born and appointed from Louisiana in 1868.

The latest available figures show that the total population of the Island of Martinique is 185,000 people of whom 25,000 lived in St. Pierre and according to Mr. Ayme, have nearly all perished.

Boston, May 9.—Much anxiety is felt by relatives and friends of Thomas E. Prentiss, consul at St. Pierre, in Melrose, his

Photo by W. E. Mason.

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