

### Carpenter's Letter

(Continued from Sixth Page.)

to speak of. The largest steamers do not call there and the chief business is done by native sailing vessels, which come in to buy birds' nests to sell to the Chinese for soup, and also tortoise shell and wax, sandal wood and cinnamon.

The natives wear sarongs like the Javanese. They are taller than them and more heavily built. They are darker than the Javanese and have frizzly hair, which is wavy and woolly. They file their teeth to a point.

They are pagans, worshipping the earth. I am told they do not cultivate the earth because they consider it holy, and that they only dig for water at times of drouth, when they make holes in the river beds. Along the coast there are some Mohammedans and a few Roman Catholics. There are two Dutch Catholic mission stations on the island, but, as a rule, little mission work has been done. This is so throughout the whole Dutch East Indies. The Dutch government does not encourage missionaries and I doubt whether any American missionaries would be permitted to settle in any of the Asiatic possessions of Holland with a view to Christianizing the people.

#### Land of Fire.

Sailing on westward from Flores, we passed by volcanic islands until we saw Sumbawa, the land of fire. This island is bigger than Jamaica, and it has many volcanoes, active and dormant. It has one whose crater is more than seven miles wide and so big that you could drop the city of Washington in it and lose it. The crater was caused by the eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815, when the whole apex of the mountain, a mass higher and thicker than all Mount Washington, was blown up into the air. Tambora was then 13,000 feet high and 8,000 feet of it was sent skyward. The explosion was so great that it was heard in Sumatra, 1,000 miles away, and also on the island of Ternate, 900 miles in the opposite direction. That was a sample of old Mother Earth's fireworks in this part of the world. She is always spitting forth fire and flame. I can see the smoke arising from several peaks here at Soerbaia and for many months I have been in sight of volcanoes, living and dead.

The eruption of Tambora was among the greatest ever known. Sea captains tell me that the ocean for miles about was covered with floating timber. There was so much ash on the sea that the ships had trouble in making their way through them, and ashes so filled the air that it was pitch dark the daytime long after the explosion away off here in Java, hundreds of miles to the westward. The whirlwinds were terrible. They tore up the largest trees by the roots. Men, horses and cattle were lifted up into the air and carried miles. The population about the volcano was destroyed and altogether 70,000 of the natives lost their lives. There was a town lying at the foot of the mountain, on the edge of the sea. When the top blew off this town sank, the sea water covered it to the depth of eighteen feet and there it is to this day. At present there is no evidence of fire about this volcano. It made one big blaze and then went out. The jungle has since grown over the streams of lava and the crater is now a mass of green, with ragged green edges.

The island of Sumbawa is ruled by the Dutch through the natives. There are two towns, each of which has about 5,000 people, and, in addition, about 140,000 living in villages. The people are not unlike our Moros. They have two sultans and many tribal chiefs. They are farmers and pony raisers. Nearly every man has his own pony and almost every native rides, carrying a spear with him. He keeps his weapon with him when at work in the fields.

#### How the Rajah Took the Census.

Shortly after leaving Sumbawa we came to the island of Lombok. This is one of the most interesting of the Dutch possessions. It has been settled for thousands of years, but it has been so shut off from the rest of the world that its natives are about the same as the Javanese were when the Dutch first came. Many of them are still Hindoos in religion, and they are divided pretty well into castes. Every now and then a widow is buried on the funeral pyre of her husband, and the natives have other old Hindoo customs.

The Dutch govern Lombok just as they do Java, and the taxes are now collected by the native officials with the assistance of the Hollanders. At one time in the past, according to Alfred Russell Wallace, an explorer who spent some time in Lombok, the rajah who was then supreme in the country had great trouble in making the natives pay up. All taxes were collected in rice, every village giving so much, according to the number of its inhabitants. The tax was light, but the island was so thickly populated that the rajah should have had enough for himself and all his officials. He had, however, thousands of men through whom the taxes passed, and after a time he found his revenues steadily falling. Reports were sent in from one district that the people were sick and could not pay, from another that the crops had fallen off, and from others that the volcanoes had destroyed the lands. At the same time it was observed that the nobles were better dressed than ever and that many were wearing gold and diamonds.

The rajah suspected something wrong. He looked over his receipts and found, according to reports, that the population of the island had fallen off. He should have



THE RAJAH AND HIS OFFICERS.

so much rice from each man, woman and child, and he there were not half as many on the island as during his father's time. He wanted to take a new census, with the hope of increasing his revenue, but he knew that if he asked his officers for it they would quickly understand that he was after their stealings and the number turned in would just be equal to the amount of rice he got last year, so that if he had a census taken it must be without the people knowing it.

#### Consulted the Great Spirit.

He thought the matter over and at last evolved the following plan of action: He sent out word to all his chiefs, priests and princes to come to his capital. Upon their arrival he told them that he had had a vision in which the spirit of the fire mountain had come to him and directed him to ascend the volcano, when it would again appear to him in the flesh and give him a communication of great importance to the people. He said that the chiefs must go with him almost to the top and that every village must furnish men to clear the roads and build bridges. This was done and with great ceremony his royal highness made the journey, while the people waited and wondered. As they neared the top of the mountain the rajah ordered all to halt and he went on alone to the extinct crater. He remained there a day and a night and then came back looking very grave. He said that he had had a communication, but would not tell what it was. He said nothing until he had reached his capital, when he assembled the chiefs, princes and priests and told them how the Great Spirit had appeared to him with a face like burnished gold and said:

"Oh, rajah, much plague and sickness and fevers are coming upon all the earth, upon men, upon horses and upon cattle, but as you and your people have obeyed me and come to my great mountain I will teach you how you and all the people of Lombok may escape the plague."

The nobles were terrified, but they wanted to hear the method of their salvation. After a short silence the rajah told them that the Great Spirit had commanded that twelve sacred kris or swords be made and that to make them every village and every district must send a bundle of needles, one needle for every head in the village. And when any grievous disease appeared in any village one of the sacred kris should be sent there and if every house in that village had sent the right number of needles the disease would immediately cease. But if not the kris would be of no avail and the people would die. Very Superstitious.

The natives of Lombok were very superstitious. The nobles believed in their rajah. They sent word out to their villages and all made haste to collect the needles with the greatest accuracy, for they feared that if one were wanting the whole village would suffer. One by one the head men of the villages brought in their needles,

The rajah received them with his own hands and marked the name of the village and district on each bundle and laid them away in a camphor wood chest. When they were all in the rajah ordered the kris to be made from them under his own eye and they were packed away for the time of the plague. Soon after this the collection of taxes occurred. To those villages who paid almost the full tax the rajah said nothing, but those who paid only a half or a fourth of what they should he gave warning, saying:

"The needles from your village are many more than from such another village, yet your taxes are much less than theirs. There must be a mistake. Go back and see who has not paid his taxes."

They did so and the taxes were at once increased, for according to law the rajah could put to death those who did not pay justly. And so the rajah became rich. He increased his soldiers and gave gold and jewels to his wife. He kept the kris and if sickness appeared in the village he sent one to it. Then if the sickness went away the kris was supposed to have healed it and the head men told the rajah of its miraculous power. If it did not go away every one was convinced that there must have been a mistake in the number of needles sent from that village and the people thought the fault was their own.

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