Java has a hot sea, a burning sun, a volcano of fire, a volcano of life.* Not a day passes without a storm upon the "Blue Mountains," and terrible lightnings, which dazzle the spectator. Torrents of electric rains intoxicate the earth, and madden vegetation. Even the forests, smoking with clouds of vapour in the sun, seem volcanoes situated half-way down the mountains.

The more abrupt acclivities are frequently inaccessible, and sometimes the forests are so dense and gloomy that he who would penetrate into their glades must carry torches at noon-day. There, without any human eye to witness, Nature celebrates at ease her orgies of vegetation, fashions her gigantic animals and river-monsters.

Stemless rhizanthaceæ seize upon the foot of a tree, and gorge themselves with its pith and life. Spines have been discovered six feet in circumference. In the deep darkness of the woods they shine with a splendour that astonishes and almost terrifies. These daughters of the shadow owe nothing of their luminous colours to the light; and planted so low in the warm vapours and rich breath of earth, seem like luxurious dreams and strange phantasies of desire.

To obtain them, frequently costs the traveller his life. In the introduction to Blume's "Flora Javæ" occurs a melancholy record of victims to their love of science. Blume himself, undiscouraged by their destiny, found himself on one occasion at Nusa—a little island remarkable for its flowers and poisonous atmosphere—in a desperate condition. His most faithful servants had perished around him, and he was left alone. The Javanese fortunately discovered and rescued him; yet, though he had been face to face with death, he felt no regret, for he had made the miracle of flowers his own. "Ill and in danger," he says, "I write hurriedly and print hastily; for perhaps I may die to-morrow."

Java, continues Michelet, has two faces. To the south it looks upon Oceania, with its pure atmosphere, and its rocks alive with polypes and madrepores. To the north, it is India still, with all

* [Michelet, "La Montagne" (ed. 1868), pp. 169–179.]

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